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HOW TO PLAY METAL GUITAR!

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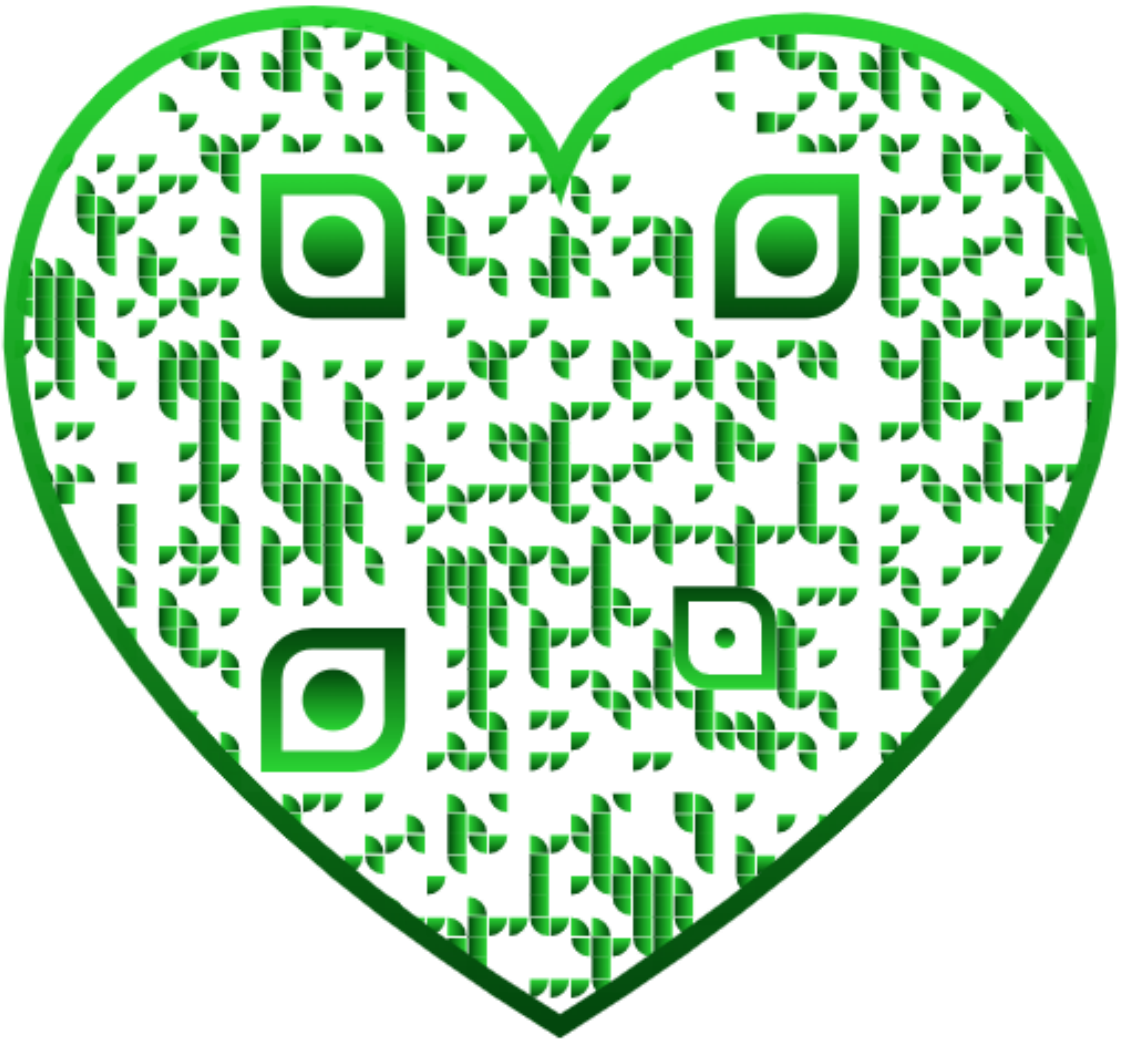

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Welcome...

I'm not sure if I've ever mentioned during my many years on TG that I own a late-90s Ibanez S540 J-Custom in a stunning multi-coloured Japanese lacquer finish. It's a rare guitar. I blew a chunk of my student loan to buy it. The svelte body and slinky fretboard made it the ideal axe for me in the early noughties when I was fiercely working on my shred chops.

In recent years however, the guitar has spent an awful lot of time in its case. I kinda feel sad about that – it's a beautiful instrument that deserves to be played, but there are only so many hours in the day and, of course, it's not my only guitar.

The reason I'm telling you this is that I've been inspired by this month's metal-themed issue to dust off the Ibanez, give it a new set of strings and rock out with a few shreddy licks. Slightly less shreddy than 20 years ago admittedly, but I still had a blast! The fretboard felt instantly familiar – a reminder for me that having the right guitar in your hands can instantly inspire.

Of course, the summer has seen a slew of amazing new metal albums, and this issue features fresh interviews with guitarists from Machine Head, Amon Amarth, Lamb Of God, Arch Enemy and Slipknot. We take a look at the very best of heavy metal in 10 iconic songs, ranging from Black Sabbath to Animals As Leaders, with some technique lessons along the way. And finally, we profile a handful of up-and-coming rising stars of metal we think will be making it big soon.

I hope the issue inspires you as much as it has me.

Chris Bird Editor

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Find your audio and video content online at:

bit.ly/tg363audio

Type this link into a web browser on any computer, smartphone or tablet and you'll be directed to TG's website at guitarworld.com. Here you'll find all the audio and video for the issue, available to download or stream.

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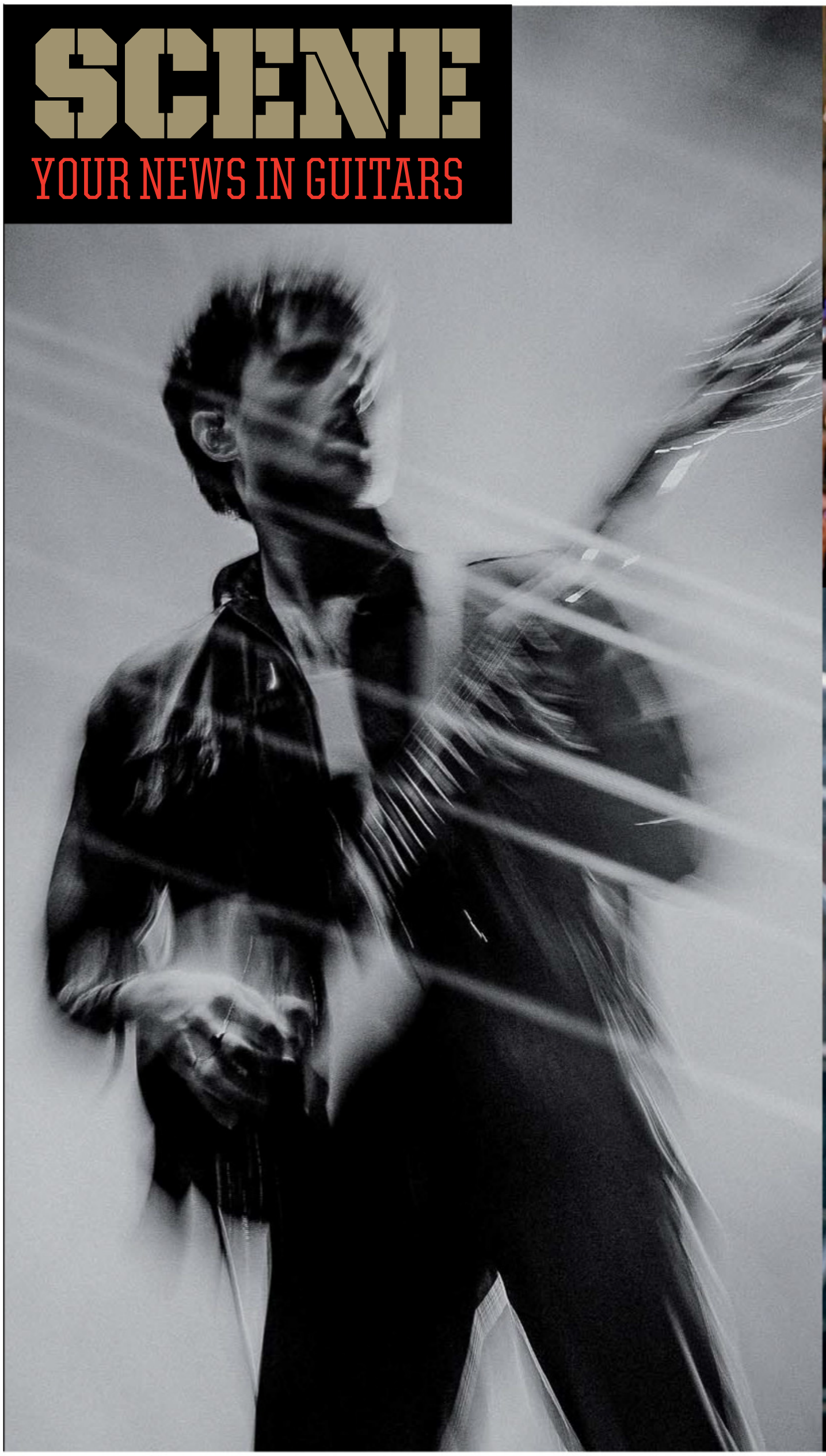

Photos Mitch Conrad

ALBUM

"I'M CHANGING SIX PEDALS AT ONCE!"

IT'S LIKE TAP-DANCING, SAYS THE AMAZONS' LEAD GUITARIST CHRIS ALDERTON

After two top 10 albums, The Amazons are back with their most uplifting work yet – the sun-drenched, acoustic-tinged *How Will I Know If Heaven Will Find Me?* Fresh from showcasing the new songs on home turf at this year's Reading Festival, lead guitarist Chris Alderton discusses his unwieldy pedalboard and a "deranged" solo.

What guitar did you use most on the record?
My main guitar, both live and in the studio, is a Duesenberg Caribou from 2015.

Name three pedals you couldn't have made the record without.
I have a Fulltone OCD that I use as my main distortion and a JHS Muffuletta that I use on the 'JHS' setting – it always sounds massive. Is it boring if I go with three distortion pedals? I do like things quite loud! I very recently actually moved away from these, but I'm going to say it anyway because I still love them: I have a TC Electronic Flashback X4 and it's a very affordable option. It was one of the very first pedals I ever had and I've struggled to take it off my 'board. I only did so recently because I've moved to a MIDI controller that helps me change my settings. Strymon makes stuff with those inputs, which is kind of irresistible.

Will that make life much easier on stage?
Yes! My pedalboard is slowly getting bigger and bigger and it was a lot to do on stage. There's a moment in *Black Magic* where I'm changing six pedals at once. It really was like tap dancing, and I'd be doing it a bar before the actual change to try and ease it. I got a GigRig G2 recently which has transformed everything. Now I can relax, focus on my playing and explore the stage.

What's your amp of choice and how do you like to set it?
It's hands down my Vox AC15. I got that for my 18th birthday and I've never played a gig without it. I have it set with pretty much everything at zero apart from the master volume at full, and the 'Normal' channel at about half way. If I'm boosting my pedals or really driving the amp, it almost compresses everything and adds a little bit of that tube sound.

Which of the new songs are you most excited to play live?
There's a lot! We had so much fun recording this album and I did a lot of it in my flat in London. I was in an attic on the hottest day of the year and we were writing *One By One*. We'd got everything down, but it was missing something. I was in my pants with a Pink Paisley Japanese Telecaster, an EBow and a slide. I recorded this deranged, heat-powered solo. It sits back in the mix, but it's this ascending pattern that happens through the end of the song. I would really like to play that live, but we'll need more guitarists on stage. It's one of my favourite moments on the album and we actually kept it from the demo.

Ellie Rogers

GUITAR

FENDER JOE STRUMMER

THE LATE CLASH FRONTMAN AND PUNK ICON GETS A NEW SIGNATURE MODEL FROM THE BIG F

Let's go all the way back to 2007 – five years after Joe Strummer, legendary frontman of punk icons The Clash, passed away. In the world of guitars, 'ageing', 'relics' and 'road wear' were still relatively new terms, and guitar brands were dividing opinion by dedicating teams of people to unleash fury on brand new guitars by beating them up, creating rusted hardware and applying secret chemicals to create discolouration and patina finishes. In most cases, it cost a bomb too, setting internet forums ablaze with outrage.

Fender's Joe Strummer Telecaster bucked this trend slightly – at least in hindsight – by offering a Mexican-made Tele based on Joe's '66 original for circa £850, complete with an impressively-aged finish bringing the 'ripped jeans' option to the masses.

Now, somehow 20 years has passed since Joe Strummer died, and to tie-in with the release of *Joe Strummer 002: The Mescaleros Years* boxset, Fender has once again issued its tribute to one of the UK's best-loved musical exports of all-time. Joining the affordable 2021 signature Joe Strummer Campfire electro-acoustic, as well as the more costly Custom Shop Esquire, the new Fender Joe Strummer Telecaster offers Strummer fans a mid-point model.

Once again, it's based on the 1966 Tele that Joe Strummer picked up in 1975 for a laughable £120 (although that's the equivalent of about £1,400 in today's money). Joe's guitar started out with a Three-Color Sunburst finish, until it was resprayed (including the scratchplate) first with a layer of grey primer and finally with the black top coat. This accounts for the multiple layers of paint you can see from the Road Worn nitrocellulose finish on Fender's re-make.

Under the paint, it's an alder body, and the neck is traditional maple, again finished in nitro and suitably worn to a satin, played-in feel. Here, it's carved to a period-correct Mid-60s C-shape, with the truss rod adjustment at the body end. It's fitted with a vintage-style 7.25-inch-radius, 21-fret rosewood fingerboard.

The electronics are as we'd expect from a Tele too, with a pair of single coils wired to a three-way switch, but in this case those Tele pickups have been voiced as Custom Joe Strummer models which are only available in this guitar. Hardware-wise, everything is vintage-style too – the frets are smaller, the bridge is a six-saddle model and the tuners, control plate and knobs have all undergone the Road Worn process to make them appropriate to the rest of the guitar.

The Fender Joe Strummer Telecaster ships with a vintage-style hardcase, and is priced at £1649.

Stuart Williams

Photos Fender/Shigeo Kikuchi/Jesse Wild

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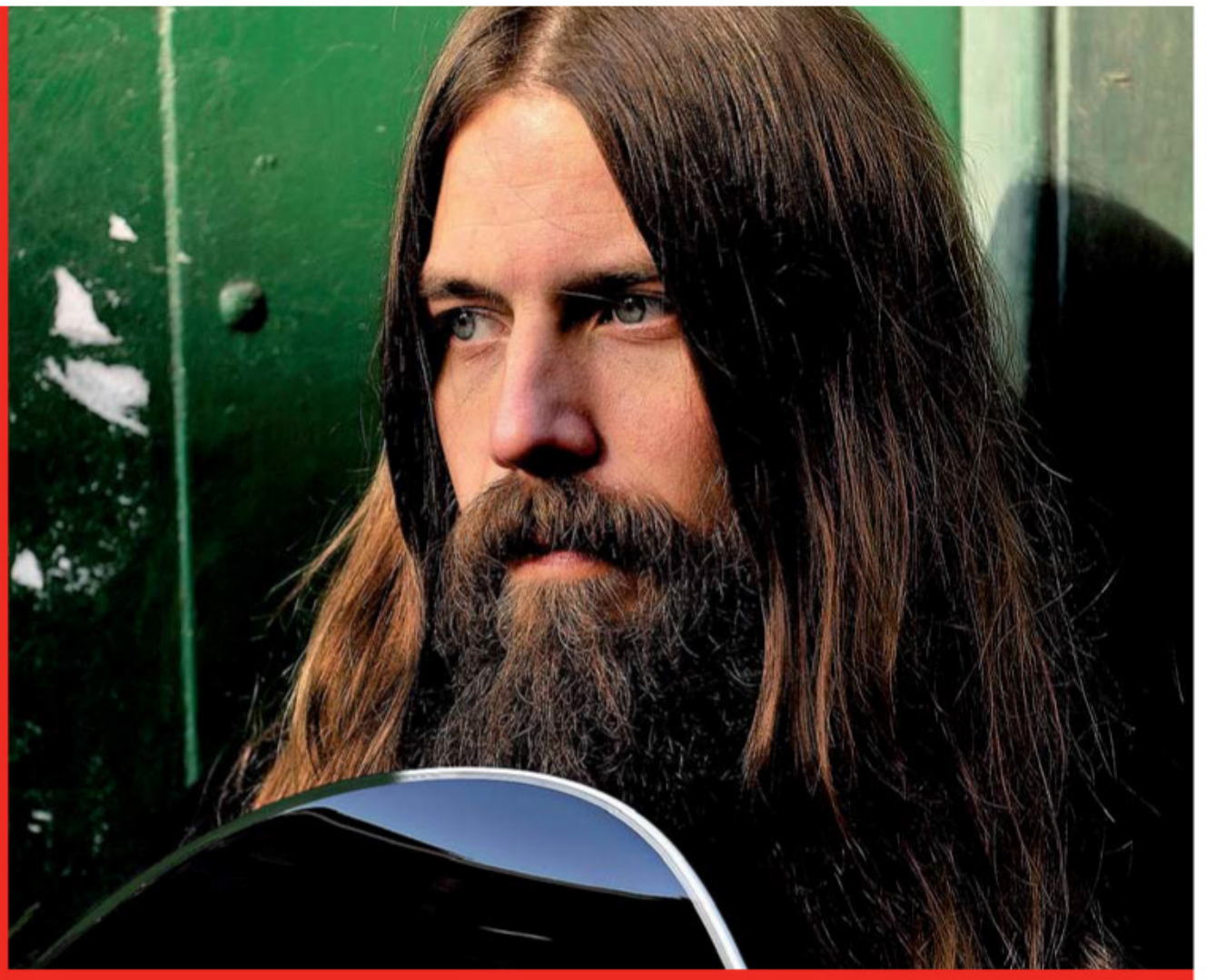
MORTON MOVES TO GIBSON!



You might have already noticed our interview with Lamb of God this issue (p28). Between us speaking with Mark and this mag hurtling toward the printer, Gibson took to social media to announce that Morton – a long time user of Gibson-owned Mesa/Boogie amps - will be switching to playing the US giant's Les Pauls on Lamb of God's upcoming tour. Morton was pictured with a Les Paul Standard and Epiphone Les Paul Custom, and fans can buy upgraded tickets giving them the chance to win an Epiphone Les Paul at every show.

PEDAL

MXR DUKE OF TONE

Continuing its theme of collaboration with 'boutique' builders, the MXR Custom Shop has unveiled The Duke of Tone – a mini-sized OD pedal based on Analog Man's Prince of Tone – the single-channel version of the revered (and difficult/expensive to come by) King of Tone.

It's got three modes, selectable via the toggle switch offering Boost/OD/Distortion. Elsewhere, the control set is kept simple with Volume/Tone/Drive knobs, and the pedal can be run in 18V mode for greater clean headroom from the boost mode. It's shipping now, priced at £185.

GUITAR

JACKSON AMERICAN SERIES SOLOIST SL3

Jackson has unveiled its brand new Soloist SL3 – the first guitar bearing the Jackson name to come out of parent brand Fender's US Corona factory, which Jackson is calling a "long awaited homecoming".

Featuring an alder body in four finishes (Gloss Black, Platinum Pearl, Riviera Blue and Slime Green), graphite-reinforced maple neck and a Speed Neck profile (complete with 12"-16" compound radius), Jackson's promo video tells us it's "Fast as f**k".

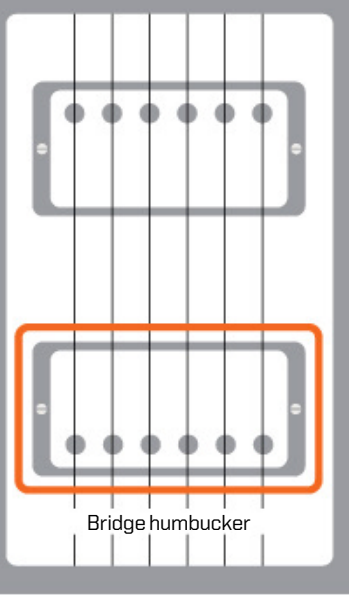
The pickups are from Seymour Duncan, with a JB TB-4 in the bridge position, and Flat Strat ssl-6 single coils in the middle and neck, while a Floyd Rose 1500 Series vibrato, Gotoh locking tuners and Dunlop straplocks complete the hardware. It ain't cheap at £2449, but Jackson reckons this is the fastest-playing guitar in its catalogue.

HOW TO

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔ Minor pentatonic scale
- ✔ Thumb fretting
- ✔ Swing feel

GET THE SOUND

CHANNEL DISTORTION



This riff is played on a humbucker-fitted strat with an overdriven, Big Muff-style fuzz tone. Dial in the gain just enough to give your tone some attitude, but without getting too far away from the blues roots of the sound. Finally, add a subtle short reverb to add a slight slap-back to the notes.

LARKIN POE

Bad Spell

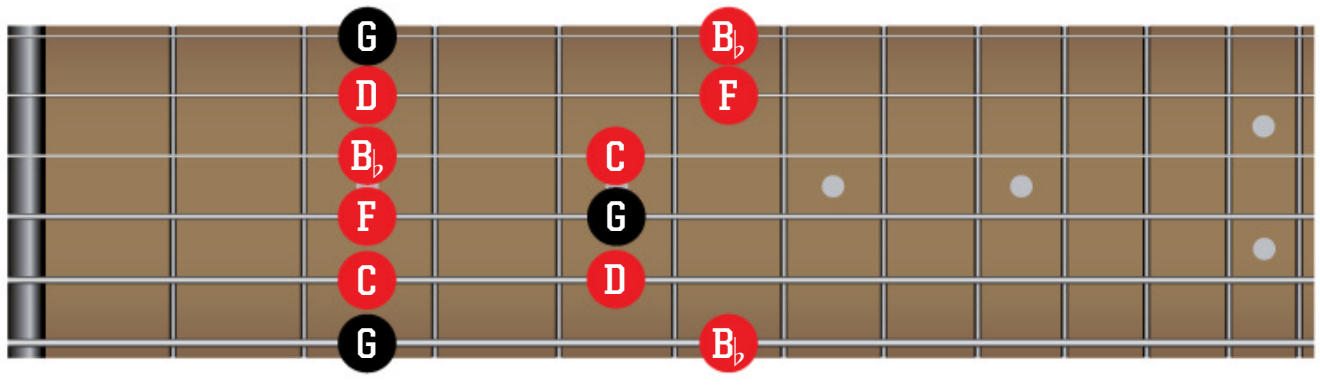
Bad Spell is Larkin Poe's latest single, taken from their forthcoming album B*lood Harmony*. Sisters Megan and Rebecca Lovell play the riff with a combination of guitar and lap steel. Here, we take a look at Megan's guitar riff, which is played within the G minor pentatonic scale.

Play the first G root with your thumb over the neck, and use your first finger to play a doublestop on the first and second strings. Next, ascend the lower octave of the scale, picking the notes in a swing feel. Now repeat the initial G chord, then use your third finger to hammer on to 5th fret of the third string, letting the second string ring before descending the scale.

The final element is the repeating 5th and 7th fret pattern on the third, fourth and fifth strings, which is played with alternate picking in a straight 16th note feel. Make sure to watch our slowed down video to see how these elements are combined.

CHEAT SHEET

Appears at: 0:00–0:23
Tempo: 85bpm
Key/scale: G minor pentatonic
Main techniques: Hammer-ons, pull-offs, doublestops, thumb fretting



The entire riff is based within the G minor pentatonic scale shown here. Prepare yourself to tackle the riff by playing up and down the scale, one note at a time, using all four fingers in a one finger per fret fashion. Try naming the notes as you go if you like. Notice there are only five different notes over two octaves.

Photo Getty

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FIRST STEPS IN GUITAR...

12-BAR BLUES

Paul takes on three chords that are the foundation for every modern guitar style

The 12-bar blues is the root of all modern guitar styles. Every notable 20th and 21st century genre evolved from the blues, and its I–IV–V chords are still the most widely used in all western music. The classic 12-bar sequence is the basis for a great number of 50s up-tempo rock 'n' roll hits (*Johnny B. Goode*, *Good Golly Miss Molly*, *Hound Dog* and hundreds more), and it keeps coming back, even in songs that don't sound like blues at first glance: U2's *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*, Duffy's *Mercy*, and Lizzo's *Better In Color* are all based on this essential chord sequence.

TEACHER

JENNA SCARAMANGA
Jenna has taught guitar for 15 years at music colleges, schools, and IGF summer camps. She studied with Guthrie Govan at BIMM, and was classic rock columnist for TG's sister magazine *Guitar Techniques*.

STUDENT

PAUL ELLIOTT
Paul has written about music since 1985 for various titles including *Sounds*, *Kerrang!*, *Q*, *MOJO* and *Classic Rock*. Among the many guitarists he has interviewed are Slash, Angus Young, Keith Richards and Jimmy Page.

JENNA SAYS...

I've chosen the key of A because it has probably the easiest chord shapes for guitar in standard tuning, and because Paul is obsessed with Prince and *Kiss* is based on a 12-bar sequence in A major. Many players start off by strumming through the sequence using open chords and four downstrokes per bar. That's fine but it doesn't sound especially bluesy. I'd suggest trying a part with more space, which will sound more authentic and allow more time to change between chord shapes.

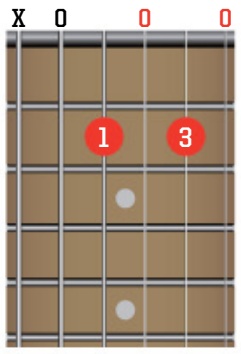
You can play the 12-bar pattern with standard major chords, but dominant 7s (A7, D7 etc) often sound better. Avoid strumming four open quarter notes per bar, which doesn't sound very bluesy. Leaving a bit more space usually works better. If you want to try something busier, palm muting will help it sound more authentic.

Words Jenna Scaramanga, Paul Elliott Guitars and backing Jenna Scaramanga

TECHNIQUE CHECK...

Get your fingers in the right place and those blues chords will sing!

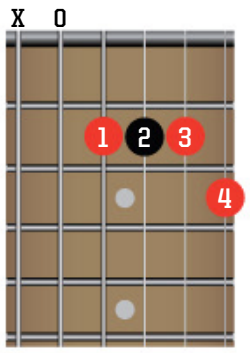
1 EASY A7 SHAPE



A7

This probably the easiest A7 chord shape – a great place to start!

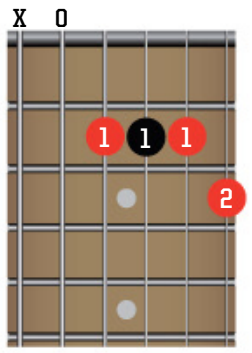
2 FOUR-FINGER A7



A7

This is a tougher voicing of an A7 chord. As indicated by the numbers, the idea is to use all four fingers.

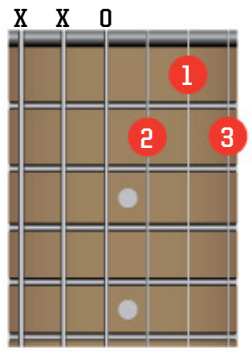
3 ONE-FINGER BARRE



A7

This shape has the same notes as before, but here you 'barre' across the 2nd fret with your first finger.

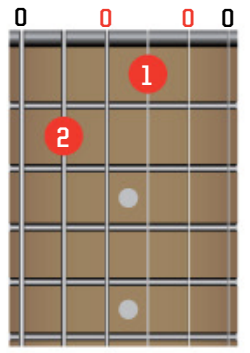
4 OPEN D7



D7

This is similar to the open D chord shape. Take note of which fingers go where.

5 OPEN E7



E7

Finally, check out this open E7 chord. That's all the chords you need for a 12-bar blues in A.

12-BAR BLUES

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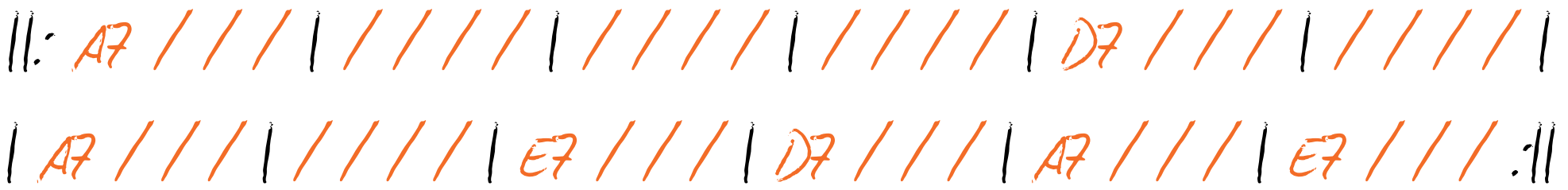

There are variations, but this is the most common 12-bar blues sequence: four bars of A7, two bars of D7, two bars on A7 again, then one bar each on E7, D7, A7 and E7.

SIMPLE BLUES RHYTHM

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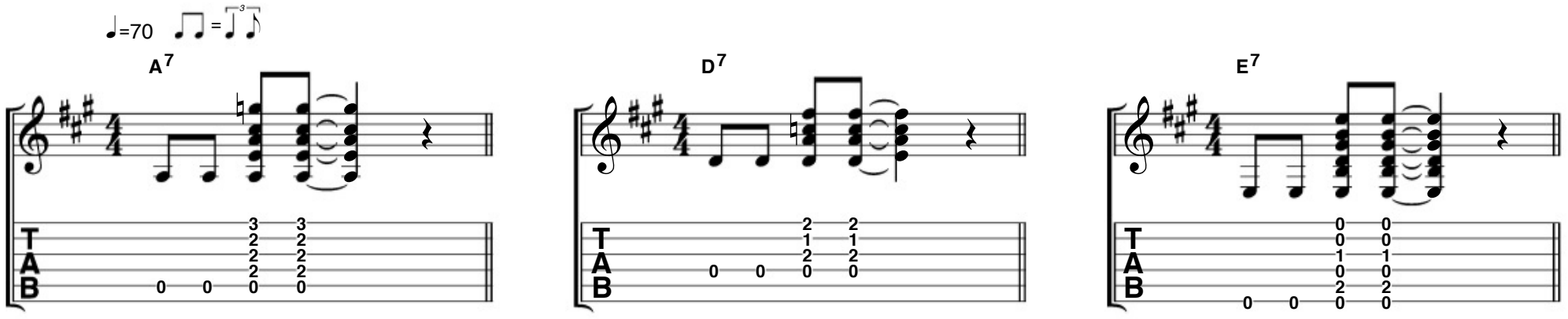


Here's a basic rhythm part you can use as a base for experimenting. Though there are three bars of music it's essentially one riff, just moved to a different pitch so that you can play it over all three chords. Blues is very dynamic. In a real song you might play sparsely during breakdowns and get busier as the music builds to a climax.

PAUL SAYS...

Although the blues is a simple art form, it was really helpful for me as a beginner to play a part with more space, allowing more time to change chord shapes. In terms of rhythm I feel confident, but I still have difficulty, as all beginners do, with smooth transitions on the fretting hand. This will of course improve with time and more practice. It was interesting to think of Prince's *Kiss* as being based on a 12-bar blues. I've heard that song a million times and never made that connection. However, I was lucky enough to see Prince perform live on many occasions, and often he would play a blues jam – brilliantly. I was also lucky to see Stevie Ray Vaughan play in London in the mid-80s. That gig was cut short when SRV collapsed and was carried off stage, but at his peak he really was untouchable.

PLAY LIKE JEFF BECK

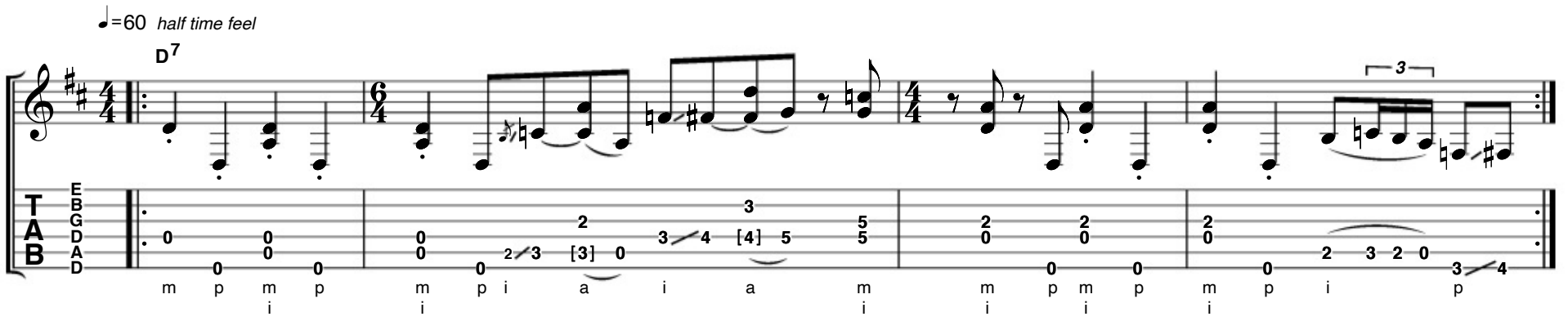
Learn how to bend it like Beck can with TG's rundown of Jeff's techniques and musical style

Jeff Beck has long been one of the pantheon of greats, yet he remains an enigma. He first made his name playing in the Yardbirds, and alongside Page and Clapton forms the Holy Trinity of British rock guitarists. He has won a hat-full of Grammys and been inducted in the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame (twice!), played with the likes of Mick Jagger, Brian Wilson, Stevie Wonder and – of course – Beck (no relation).

But (Jeff) Beck still has mystery about him. He has constantly evolved; from his blues and classic-rock roots, he has navigated through funk, hard rock, jazz, dance… He stopped using a pick decades ago, and now has this dynamic fingerstyle that's at once aggressive, full of rhythmic chutzpah, super-smooth and mellow. His phrasing is always considered; his right hand is always jockeying his Strat's vibrato. Beck has used Fender Esquires, a 1956 Gretsch 6128 Duo Jet, Les Pauls; he even used a Jackson Soloist on 1985's *Flash*. Yet, he's long been synonymous with Strats, favouring his white '93 Custom Shop above all else. You'll find Marshall and Fender amps in his backline, too. But the gear is just a fraction of the story. The rest is in his head and hands, just out of reach for we mere mortals.

Here in our tutorial, we'll take you through Jeff's approaches and unique sound, showing you some of the tricks he employs to coax beautiful, seemingly impossible sounds from his Strat. String bending, whammy bar scoops, tapping, Indian-style melodies and Mixolydian modes are all on the menu, so plug in and let's get bending like Beck can!

DROP D MIXOLYDIAN RIFF **BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO**

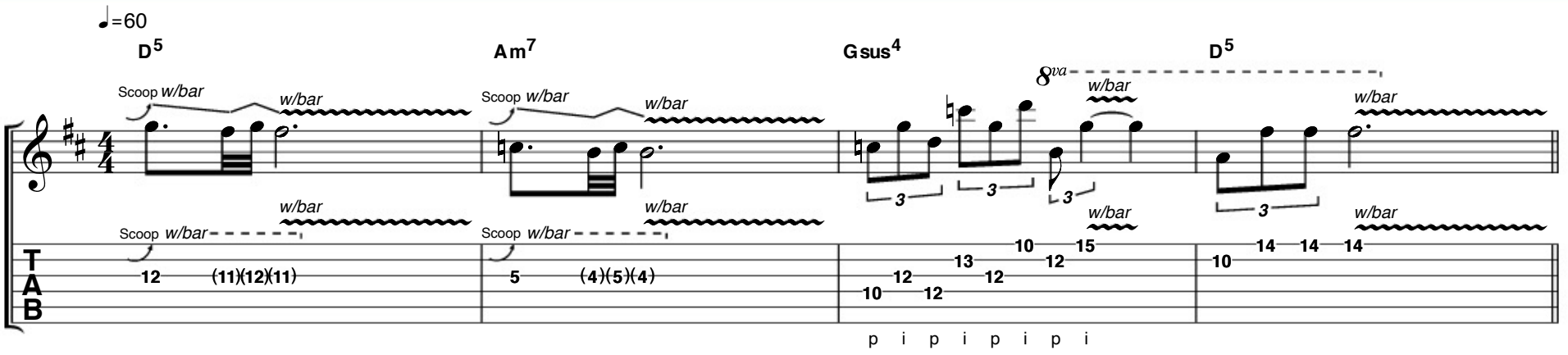


You'll need your guitar in drop D tuning for our first example. The riff uses several two-note chords to help spell out the D Mixolydian mode (D E F♯ G A B C). Use your thumb to pick the sixth string, your first and second fingers for the doublestops and your third finger only on the higher strings.

Words Henry Yates Guitars & backing Steve Allsworth

SPELLING THE CHORDS

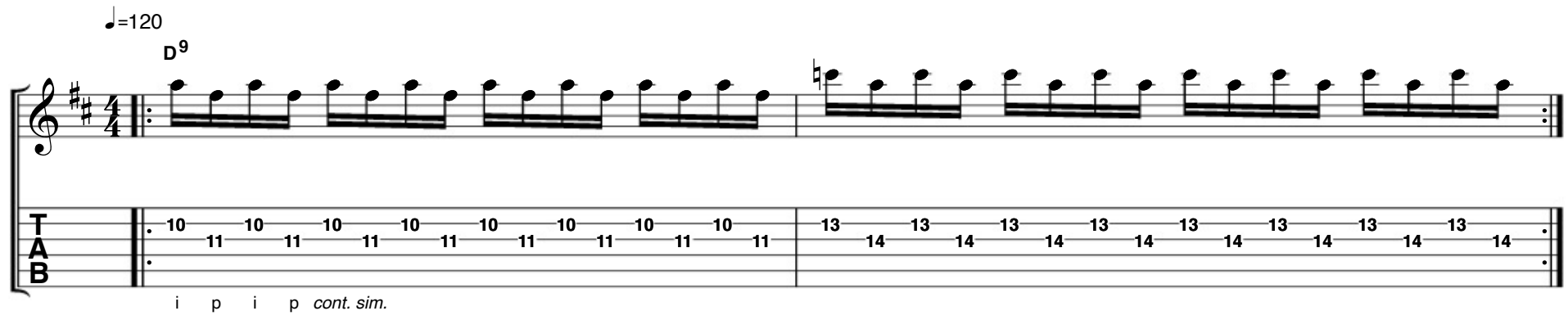
BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO



As well as subtle use of the whammy bar for Indian-style sounds in bars 1 and 2, each of these four bars targets important chord tones such as the root note, the 3rd and the 5th. Use your thumb and first finger for the melodic run in bar 3.

HARMONICA-STYLE LICK

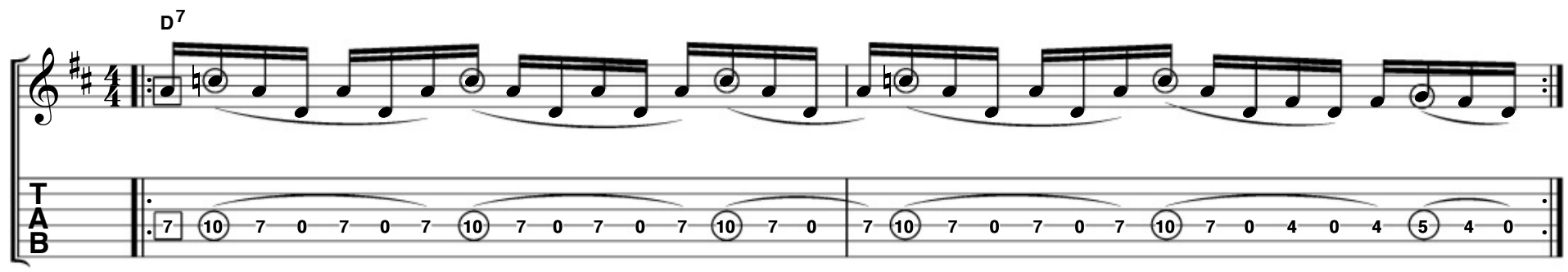
BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO



Jeff's unique way of approaching simple bluesy harmonica-style 3rd ideas such as this is to pivot between his thumb and index finger.

TAPPING LICK

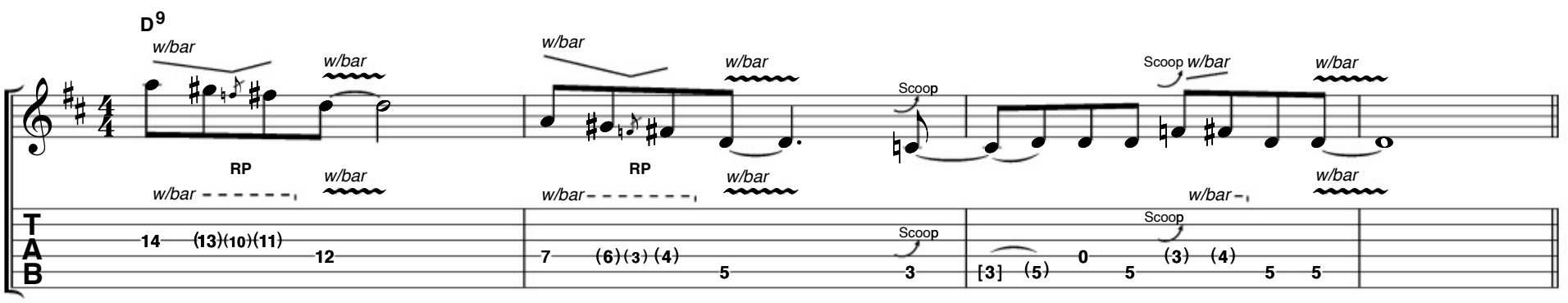
BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO



This idea targets the important major 3rd (a 4th-fret F♯ note) and ♭7th (10th fret C) from the D Mixolydian mode. Make sure to mute the idle strings.

SLIDE GUITAR EMULATION

BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO



This subtle approach is central to a lot of Jeff's playing. The idea is to use the whammy bar to change smoothly from note to note, much like you would do if you were using a slide. Pick with your thumb and first finger, and use the three spare fingers of your pick hand to control the bar.

Words Jonathan Horsley Photo Pip

"HEAVY DISTORTION AND CHAOS AND POWER!"

For fast-rising punk pop band **Pale Waves**, there's only one way to play guitar: "Loud!"

The first thing that strikes you about Pale Waves' *Unwanted* is that it is *loud*. Like, loud in the volume sense. Even with the dial turned down it still sounds up. It isn't background music. All this is by design on an album that takes the Manchester band's sound from the soft focus of indie and synth-pop toward something harder and more immediate. You could call it pop-punk, so long as it is on the understanding that the needle ping-pongs between either extreme.

Lead singer and guitarist Heather Baron-Gracie admits the volume is crucial, perhaps never more so than on occasions such as this when she knew exactly what she wanted to say with the songs. When you're certain about something, volume becomes an important dynamic; it makes you want to shout.

"We all listen to music so loud, and we always get told off because we have our in-ears so loud as well," Heather says. "We don't like listening to soft music. It was really important for us that we sounded like an actual band. We have grown a lot as players and performers, and as writers, and we just wanted to turn up with real instruments and turn the backing track down. That meant that it was gonna be really loud but that is what we wanted. We wanted it to be really unapologetic, and really in your face. Force people to listen to it; they don't have a choice."

Pop-punk is by its nature a breezy and ostensibly people-friendly art form. It works gangbusters or not at all. But it's really quite an insidious business when you think about it. Like screenwriting, it survives on its ability to manipulate its audience, to elicit a reaction, to render them helpless. For Heather, one of the ways you know that songs such as *Jealousy* and *Alone* are working for people is to see them react in real-time. The audience doesn't stand a chance.

"Yeah, we were playing *Jealousy* from February, before it even came out, and you can just tell," she says. "The crowd just interacts with this song so much more than the others. When we were on tour with Five Seconds Of Summer in the US, a lot of people didn't know us and when we played *Jealousy* it was like everyone in the room just lit up – including us – and you can tell that that song always got the best reaction and that kind of made us feel like, oh sh*t, we have made the right record here."

That gave Pale Waves the confidence they needed. The band knew they had something. Heather knew the songwriting was bang on the money. *Unwanted* was written in Burbank,

NEW WAVE
Left to right: Hugo Silvani, Heather Baron-Gracie, Ciara Doran, Charles Wood

California, then recorded in Los Angeles under the auspices of producer Zakk Cervini. Manchester has a rich history in pop music and indie rock but La La Land has the sun, the palm trees, and the heightened sense of reality that comes with a city in which everyone is trying to be someone or something else.

"LA feels like it's its own entity," Heather says. "It has a separation to the outside world in a way, and I think that's good but also bad at the same time." What it offered Pale Waves was that support network. It was a place where everybody involved with the record knew exactly what they wanted to achieve. There is arguably no one better than Cervini for contemporary pop-punk. A big part of Pale Waves' sound is a sense of space. Ciára Doran's drums have room to push air around in. Charlie Wood's bass guitar is elemental, like it has a centre of gravity unto itself.

"Yeah, you talked about the album being so loud before and one thing that allows it to be so loud is that it is not over-complicated," says lead guitarist Hugo Silvani. "There are a few elements going on but you can push them to make them sound absolutely massive. Whereas, if you've got a hundred things on, making it sound super loud and aggressive suddenly becomes very difficult because you are battling against every single element."

"I don't like to over-complicate things," adds Heather. "Let the song speak for itself. Everything around it has to benefit the song and enable it to work even better, to perform even better. I tend to be like, 'We don't need to layer this guitar 10 times. It already sounds amazing.'"

Baron-Gracie's vocals dominate the foreground of the mix but they're supported by rhythm guitars with box office tones, all pristine 80s sheen, saturated, thickened with modulation that Silvani credits to double tracking and plugins from STL ToneHub. Neural DSP plugins were used for the similarly varnished cleans. Not only did this in-box-solution give Silvani and Baron-Gracie the tones they were looking for, it saved time in the studio, maintaining focus on the performances.

"The tweakability of it is insane, and also it sounds real," Hugo says. "If you're going to tell me that anyone can tell it's not a Marshall amp, then I just don't believe it."

There were still real guitar amps in the setup. Silvani was putting his number one Gibson Les Paul through a Klon overdrive pedal and going direct through a Marshall head. Cervini's custom made Fender Telecaster made it onto a few tracks, as did a Gibson ES-335 semi-hollow, which Silvani prized for its transparency.

"It was mainly those three things because it keeps coherency," he explains. "When you have those constraints, it allows you to create more with the sound. Whereas you could have 15 different guitars and use a different guitar for each layer, a different pedal for every modulation sound on the album, but I think that blurs the potency of the record and the world you have created. What would you have if you were in a practice room? A couple of guitars, your pedals... That is what makes it coherent. You never want to blur the pop songwriting that is always there in our songs."

What it comes down to is a sensibility. Pale Waves have given themselves enough room that they can retrofit different musical atop the pop framework. Just as long as the pop hooks are left untouched, they can warp their sound in all kinds of ways, giving their songs a new type of energy. *Unwanted* is direct, pugnacious. As Heather says, "I wanted heavy distortion and chaos and power." This could have been written on the whiteboard in the control room.

"WE DON'T NEED TO LAYER A GUITAR 10 TIMES"
HEATHER BARON-GRACIE

It is the spirit in which the record was made. But that said, Pale Waves still chase down the melodies and pursue hooks as far as they'll go. They'll still pull their audience in on a trail of eighth-note breadcrumbs and the promise of a sing-along chorus any time now.

"It is always a pop song but we just decorate it differently, and that has always been super important to us, that we maintain that, because that is the core of us," Heather says. "We always want a song that everyone can listen to the chorus once and then sing it back to you. We don't really have an interest in playing an eight-minute song where no one can remember what they heard."

Baron-Gracie has a degree in music from BIMM, in Manchester, so maybe that could account for the meticulous craft you hear on *Unwanted*. Then again, maybe not. She says she is not so sure what she learned from it all. But then, that stuff tends to get buried under the experiences of actually doing this for a living, of becoming a performer, seeing your compositions in action. In 2021, with *Who Am I?*, maybe Baron-Gracie wasn't so sure of herself. But *Unwanted* benefits from a clarity of purpose. It has a coherence. When you catch Pale Waves live, she guarantees you'll remember the songs, you'll soon work out how they'll go. And you'll undoubtedly find her onstage with a Fender Mustang or her beloved Vox Phantom.

"I feel like there are two classic guitars in my life that I have a sentimental attachment to them that I struggle to replace them," she says. "A guy went to Italy and made that black Vox Phantom just for me so it is hard for me to pick up a generic guitar that anyone could have because I feel like this is a special guitar of mine and it is definitely one of my most prized possessions. I mean, it doesn't sound great. It sounds a bit like sh*t. But when you put it through the pedals it sounds decent and it looks amazing. I am about the aesthetic too. I actually got into the Vox Phantom because Matty [Healy] from The 1975 gave me a 12-string Vox Phantom for my birthday, and that theme of just having the Vox Phantom carried on because it is the shape of a coffin and I kind of like the gothicness of that."

Photo Ami Ford

ARTIST SIGNATURE

ANGEL VIVALDI

SAVAGE ELEGANCE

PRO-MOD DK24-6 NOVA

CHARVEL®

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Photo: Andrew Minarik

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Photo Anthony Scanga

The Metal Issue

Slipknot guitarist Mick Thomson tells TG this month: "Metal can go in a million different directions." He's absolutely right, of course. There's huge musical diversity within the genre and that's what we're celebrating this month with The Metal Issue.

In this 45-page special, the guitarists in five of the biggest and best metal bands on the planet speak about their new albums and the gear and techniques utilised in the quest for ultimate heaviness – Robb Flynn of Machine Head, Olavi Mikkonen and Johan Söderberg of Amon Amarth, and Mark Morton and Willie Adler from Lamb Of God, Michael Amott from Arch Enemy, and of course Big Mick and Jim Root from Slipknot.

We profile up-and-coming rising stars of metal, three young guitar bands you need to know about, each with its own distinctive flavour: Chat Pile, Moodring and Heriot.

And we analyse the art of metal guitar in 10 landmark songs from across the decades, beginning with Black Sabbath, ending with Animals As Leaders, and going in-depth on Metallica's *Master Of Puppets* with insider knowledge from producer Flemming Rasmussen. And if you're itching to get playing, you can also learn the trademark techniques of these titans of metal with our 'play in the style of' lessons. Right, let's plug in, engage metal horns – and rock out!

Words Amit Sharma

"YOU'VE GOT TO SCRAPE EVERY DOWN-PICK. IT'S F*CKIN' HARD!"

In the revitalised **Machine Head**, leader **Robb Flynn** is playing as fast and heavy as ever – while also channelling Bob Marley!

The new Machine Head album *Of Kingdom And Crown* is a jaw-dropping return to form that sits head-to-head with the Bay Area band's classics *Burn My Eyes* and *The Blackening*. It is also the band's first album with Polish guitarist Wacław 'Vogg' Kiełtyka, who remains a member of death metal outfit Decapitated.

Machine Head's leader, guitarist/vocalist Robb Flynn, discusses the impact of his new six-string partner and explains how Queen's Brian May has been a huge influence on the band's sound. He also reveals another unlikely inspiration for a new Machine Head song – reggae icon Bob Marley.

Let's cut to the chase – what's the hardest riff to play on the new album?

I think *Become The Firestorm*. There's a lot going on in that one, like the tremolo picking idea which is the main riff at the beginning of the song and also comes back later. The chorus has uses this finger tapping technique, but it's done with the pick. You can't do it with your finger because it won't be fast enough. You can only get that speed with the side of your pick... it's a bit of a mind-f*ck!

Do you mean pick tapping as in the Joe Satriani technique?

Is it? I don't know! We just came up with doing it that way in the studio. The engineer told me that my fingers weren't tapping fast enough and suggested I use the pick. After trying it, I was like 'Holy sh*t! That works!' I'd never done it like that before, it's always been with my right middle finger.

There's a section in *Unhallowed* that sounds like the kind of harmonised symphony Brian May would come up with!

That's total Brian May worship, for sure! I don't think people realise how much Brian has influenced Machine Head over the years. Maybe I haven't mentioned him enough, but going all the way back to *The Blackening*, any time we've harmonised, I'm asking myself 'What would Brian do here?' He's the master of trippy layers and perfect bends that are always in tune, which is hard to do. I haven't told anyone else this, but on another song, *Arrows In Words From The Sky*, I ended up being influenced by Bob Marley! I went on vacation to the Turks And Caicos Islands and every night at our hotel there was a Bob Marley cover band. His music was being pummelled into my brain at all times. I was learning his songs watching these guys play, so I figured out how to play *Could This Be Love* or *Three Little Birds* as well as some Beatles stuff like *Hey Jude*. Much to the dismay of my wife and kids, I brought my acoustic because, f*ck yeah, I want to play guitar on the beach!

Well, you're only human, Robb!

I'd start drinking beer at 2pm every day and bring my acoustic out. Every time I sang those songs, complete strangers would join in. I'd walk past a hundred people and 75 would sing along with me. I wanted to write a song that would allow some long-haired drunk guy to have random people join in on vocals, so I did!

On this new album you're joined by Decapitated's Wacław 'Vogg' Kiełtyka, arguably one of the greatest metal guitarists of his generation...

His leads on this album are just f*ckin' mindboggling. They're so ripping and tasty and memorable, those melodies get stuck in your head. And you're right – he's one of the most phenomenal guitar players of a generation and also super nice. We became friends around 2011 and stayed in touch. When I announced the *Burn My Eyes* anniversary tour (in 2019), we were still in the process of auditions. He messaged me on Instagram saying 'Dude, I cannot wait to see this, it's one of

my favourite albums!' At some point he asked me how the auditions were going and I told him people were struggling with the rhythms...

In what sense?

Machine Head was born out of that thrash scene and you've got to scrape every down pick. It's f*ckin' hard! All the people we were trying out were really soft and loose. I told him that nobody could quite get the attack. I've got a hole a quarter-inch deep right under my strings from down-picking. You've got to dig in! He sent in a video of him playing [Machine Head's 2003 single] *Imperium* and my jaw hit the floor. He played it better than I could! We got together in Germany before the tour, plugged into a couple of tiny battery-powered Roland Cubes in my hotel room, and I felt like I'd been jamming with the guy for 20 years.

What guitars did you use for the main tones on *Of Kingdom And Crown*?

My main guitar is one I call Murder Black, it's the matt black one with the hole I mentioned from all the down-picking. It's a custom made by this guy called Dragan who has this company called Fine Art Guitars. He's made me a whole fleet that I've been using for the last 12 years. They're pretty much all I play, with Brazilian rosewood and ebony fretboards. I have the Jackson jumbo frets put on them, which I love. I don't know what Jackson do to their frets but those things play like butter. I hate playing guitars where the frets feel scratchy. I like a raw bone nut and the EMG 81/85 combo. The 81 is a huge part of the Machine Head sound, it's just got something. I like the old school fat EMG pots. A buddy of mine collects them for me and we swap the new ones out for those, they sound better for some reason. Then there's my custom Love/Death which has a whammy bar, it's essentially the same guitar with a Floyd Rose. That's what you're hearing on the *Choke On The Ashes Of Your Hate* leads and the beginning of *Bloodshot*, but I only used it for the whammy bits.

And how about amps and pedals?

I like the old stuff. As well as a Jimi Hendrix fuzz and a Jet phaser, I have an Electric Mistress that's like 10 inches wide. It's definitely one of the secrets to our sound and on for about 30 per cent of every Machine Head record. I'm always layering it in there, like on the beginning of *Imperium* which was heavily effected by the Mistress. Without it, you just don't get that watery sound. I like using the Cry Baby that activates when you step on it. I run chorus and delay through the effects loop, that's a big part of my lead sound going through my old school block letter 5150. All the leads were done through that. When I was tracking the riffs, my engineer built me a 5150 tone on the Neural DSP Mike Fortin plug-in. It was just easy that way. We chose to record the DIs and reamp it later if needed, mainly through a Kemper and Quad Cortex.

A lot of your most classic riffs use harmonics – and these new songs are no exception...

It really is the Machine Head trademark, you know? When you hear any other band doing it in their riffs, you know it came from us. Eddie Van Halen occasionally used them to colour a riff, but with us, it's actually a big part of the riff. It was actually just a happy accident. When I started playing guitar, me and my buddy had just seen Metallica opening for Raven in front of 250 people at the Keystone in Berkley. We wanted to start a band that sounded even faster than Metallica. My dad rented me a cheap guitar because we didn't have much money. It was a little Aria Pro that came with a four-inch amp that had barely any distortion. I learned D.R.I. and Celtic Frost songs which had all this feedback but I couldn't figure out how they made that sound. That amp couldn't do it, but at some point I figured out that hitting a harmonic would create something similar. So I started using harmonics to create feedback. Six months later, a friend with a proper stack was like, 'No, you dummy, that noise is called feedback!' But I'd already gotten good at using harmonics so I just carried on.

How did you master such ferocious down-picking?

If you want to master down-picking, it's not necessarily about picking hard, it's more about that scrape. It's a mixture of the angle you hold your pick and how you rest your hand on the guitar. Another important thing is to lay that pinky across all six strings... you can't have them ringing out! It cleans it all up. As a general rule, I always try to keep learning. Even now, after doing this a very long time, I'll watch instructional videos. You can always get better – it might only be one per cent at a time but there's room for growth. Right now, there's this guy called Bernth from Austria and he makes pretty entertaining videos. I've been doing his exercises recently, particularly one where you have to double pick each note in a riff. Do that for 60 seconds at speed and your arm will be burning! That's how I improve.

"I'VE GOT A HOLE RIGHT UNDER MY STRINGS FROM DOWN-PICKING!"

SPEED KING
Robb Flynn is the driving force in Machine Head, but hails Wacław 'Vogg' Kiełtyka as "one of the most phenomenal guitar players of a generation"

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Words Ellie Rogers

"WHAT REALLY MATTERS IS THE RIFF"

The sheer power of **Amon Amarth** comes from two guitarists with no-frills gear...

Over the course of three decades, Amon Amarth have marched forth as standard bearers for a unique brand of melodic metal, which sets epic tales of gods and warriors to a thunderous soundtrack of tremolo-picked riffs, drop-tuned chugs and melodic solos.

Famed for their theatrical live shows and aggressive-yet-catchy songcraft, the band has risen to a much beloved status among fans of anthemic metal all over the world. Now, under the steam of their twelfth studio album *The Great Heathen Army*, lead guitarist Olavi Mikkonen reflects on how the band's rise has been more of a stoic campaign than a surprise dawn raid.

"We never really became a big band from the start. We always took small steps, so the growth for our band has been great in that way," he explains. "We appreciate where we are. We don't take things for granted, and we can see that the reason we are where we are today is because of hard work. There's millions of bands behind our backs trying to take our position, so we need to continue to work hard."

This uncompromising work ethic is writ large upon the nine track aural assault that is *The Great Heathen Army* – sonically dense, foreboding and without a let up in pace throughout its course. Mikkonen's axe-wielding bandmate, Johan Söderberg, explains that the goal was "just to make it a little darker and more death metal," than 2019's *Berserker*. "That album was more in the heavy metal style," he says, "and we wanted to go back to the darker themes again. The pandemic for sure added frustration, so that made the songs more brutal."

To carry this darkness and frustration, the pair slackened their strings down to reach the brutal lows of B Standard (also known as Baritone Tuning), where each string is lowered two and a half steps – or a perfect 4th – from the standard EADGBE tuning. A query as to whether adopting 7-string guitars, in the vein of many progressive metallers, might make life easier at these abyssal depths elicits a unified "no" from Mikkonen and Söderberg.

For Mikkonen, it's about simplicity: "We don't have to use 7-strings because we're already tuned down to B," he explains. "I don't need to make it even more complicated!" For Söderberg, it all comes down to playability: "I don't like those 7-strings because I don't like the feel of the necks – they're too wide. What we do is put much heavier strings on. I use D'Addario strings and they're 13-62 in thickness, so basically it's like a 7-string guitar, but without the top string."

In the axe department, Söderberg has long favoured an ESP E-II EX, which he's self-modded and replaced the seldom-used neck pickup with a light. Also with utility in mind, he explains: "I like this EX shape because it's very well balanced when you stand up and play. Some guitars are front heavy so the neck tips over all the time."

Mikkonen depends on a similarly streamlined custom Jackson X-Stroyer. "I'm an easy guy," he laughs. "I just

HEAVY HITTERS
Olavi Mikkonen (left) and Johan Söderberg

use one pickup and volume and that's it. There's no tremolo or anything, it's just easy going."

Their amp and effects rigs were revolutionised by the advent of the Kemper Profiler, which now serves all their tonal needs. "The Kemper is a fantastic thing," says Mikkonen. "It takes up little space, it's easy to switch sounds. It's fantastic, compared to how it was when I started to play, when you had huge amps and tons of different pedals that were always running out of batteries."

Söderberg adds: "We make profiles ourselves. We usually use some kind of EVH 5150 or something, then usually we put a Tube Screamer in front of the amp and then we make a profile of that. That's pretty much the only sound I use. Then, when I do lead parts, I just put a delay effect on it. Then I use one clean sound as well."

In an ingenious display of practical nous, Söderberg has also rigged a pedalboard with five footswitches to alternate between these three core sounds – thus increasing the probability of stomping on the right one.

"I have two of the same rhythm sound next to each other. Then I have two more knobs for the lead sound, with the same sound on both, and then one for the clean sound." He laughs: "When you run around on stage and there's flame throwers and bombs going off everywhere and lights blinking, it's easier to step on the wrong knobs if you have too many knobs to step on!"

When it comes to writing, the pair will typically compose separately in their own studios, but their respective guitar playing counterpart is never far from mind. Explains Mikkonen, "When I write stuff, I'm writing Johan's parts too, and it's the same thing with him. He writes my parts in his songs. There's only a few things that I'll want both guys playing at the same time. I usually want things to be harmonised."

Amon Amarth's no frills approach to gear leaves plenty of room for their hulking great dual-guitar, riff-heavy sound to take centre stage on *The Great Heathen Army*. As Mikkonen puts it: "In the end, what really matters is the riff. If you don't have a good riff, it doesn't matter how much you 'pimp' it, it's never going to be good. You can't polish a turd and it's the same thing with riffs."

Words Amit Sharma

"WE SWING HARDER BY STAYING ON THE ONE STRING"

For the two guitarists in Lamb Of God, the heaviest riffs are all about groove

If there's one word that summarises the Lamb Of God approach to guitar, it's groove. The Virginian metal quintet know how to write riffs that feel heavy enough to have their own orbit, with all kinds of intricate pushes and pulls contributing to the unrelenting attitude and neck-thickening swagger. According to guitarists Mark Morton and Willie Adler, it's their contrasting styles and combined dynamic that creates much of the group's signature sound.

GROOVE IS IN THE HEART
Mark Morton [left] and Willie Adler

You seem to prefer stretching out riffs onto the lowest string, rather than using the others. That's a big factor in your sound...

Mark: Somewhere along the way we figured out that we could swing harder at our riffs by staying on the one string. It's just physics, right? You can hit a thicker string harder and dig in more, and then there's that tonal quality to it too. The extra work for the left hand means we can pound harder with our right hands. So we're very lateral in terms of our approach. We get this lope and strut because we're working harder for it and playing it ham-fisted. Basically, we're really caveman-ing this sh*t!

Willie: There's definitely a tonal quality to staying on that low string. It sounds more riffy to my ears and more streamlined. Yeah, it's harder in the long run – there's more jumping around and fretboard aerobics, but the end quality is more mean sounding. The thickness of the string also has a bigger tone, it comes out more growly and metal.

What's the secret behind those tight bursts heard on new tracks like *Ditch* and older tracks like *Ruin*?

Mark: I think one of the things you could do to improve your metal chops is work on your triplets. They are integral to the feel and gallop in a lot of the most famous metal riffs, so it would be a good idea to get used to doing them starting on both an up and a down. If the triplet falls on the up, you should be able to sound as tight and in-sync as if it was on the down. The same goes for alternate picking. A lot of people think I might down-pick everything, but no – even though it often sounds like it. When you work on the power of your up-picking, you can get the same push and force. A lot of different factors come into play, like how you palm-mute and where your wrist sits.

Willie, your picking style is quite unorthodox. Can you explain what's going on there?

Willie: I must admit I do have a weird picking style! I don't know if it's a good thing, but it's definitely my thing. It's nothing I've been taught. Any teacher who tried teaching it this way would not be teaching for very long! I'm sure it gives me carpal tunnel and all kinds of arthritis, but it's just the way I feel comfortable. When I look at pictures or videos of myself, I always think 'Goddamn, that looks painful!' It's definitely coming from my wrist but there's a lot of movement from the hand as well, I rotate my thumb and index finger to manipulate the pick. It's funny, Randy [Blythe, vocals] will hit me up out of the blue and text when he's having dinner with a friend who will ask, 'Why does Willie pick that way?!' And I always say, 'I don't know dude, that's just the way it is!'

Mark, as well as the blistering blues runs, there's an atmospheric side to your leads, like the intro to *Walk With Me In Hell*...

Mark: I think about Soundgarden and Fugazi – the atmospheric stuff comes from there. I'm a 90s kid. I had come of age and was old enough to appreciate the wave of music. There was this sort of undoing for guitar, because I learned how to play as a thrash metal kid in the 80s. Then I got into all the 90s music. Duane Denison from The Jesus Lizard is a phenomenal player. He could be so brittle, with really unexpected and odd note choices. I was intrigued by those kinds of players and consciously unlearned all the super technical bits I'd picked up from

"TO IMPROVE YOUR METAL CHOPS, WORK ON YOUR TRIPLETS" MARK MORTON

Shrapnel Records. If you listen to Sonic Youth, it's more about textural playing. Is that any less relevant than Tony MacAlpine? I don't think so. Thurston Moore and Tony MacAlpine… I love 'em both!

You both generally stick with Mesa/Boogies for tight, controlled saturation. Is that what we're hearing on the new album? And which guitars did you use this time round?

Mark: Yeah, there were definitely some of my Jackson Dominions in there. One thing that got used a lot was a custom Telecaster Deluxe fitted with my DiMarzio Dominion pickups. For whatever reason, that guitar through the Mesa/Boogie Badlander sounded really good. I did my leads with this really cool Jackson Adrian Smith signature. There was a Maxon overdrive in there for certain things.

Willie: I had all my ESPs including my customs and both of my USA models, which I love. There were quite a few Mesa/Boogies with us, though the Triple Crown is my amp of choice. I had some Fortin pedals thrown in for good measure, like the Grind and 33, though never in conjunction with each other.

So what would you say are the main differences in your playing styles?

Mark: Willie definitely seems to pull forward and on top, while I'm a little more swaggy and lazy, just a little bit behind the beat. But we're very aware of that too – so when we need to be airtight, we can do that pretty easily and sit right on top of each other if needed. There's also a healthy competition between us. Neither of us wants to be the guy who slopped it up!

Willie: Mark is more bluesy and my riffs tend to be atonal and abnormal because I don't know any theory. Though in recent years the lines have blurred a little bit – especially over the last two albums. My ears seem to gravitate towards things that don't fit inside the box. Our dynamic is what creates our sound. I can get anxious and wanna 'go, go, go!', while Mark is more laidback. I know that I can drive him to go faster and he can pull me back from the brink of insanity. I wouldn't want to play guitar with anybody else and, frankly, I'm not sure if I could!

Words Amit Sharma

"IT SOUNDS AGGRESSIVE, BUT I HAVE A VERY SOFT TOUCH"

Arch Enemy's riffs are "a merciless onslaught of fast picking". But there's also room for "sexy" vibrato...

One of Sweden's premier metal exports, Arch Enemy are led by guitarist Michael Amott, who combines his love for classical motifs alongside ferocious heavy metal thunder on the band's new album *Deceivers*. He tells TG how he was influenced by Michael Schenker and Dave Mustaine, and how modern technology has given him more flexibility in the studio.

KILLING IT SOFTLY
"I don't like to thrash my guitar too much," says Michael (right).

The new album's opening track *Handshake With Hell* starts with some neoclassical tapping and also features some baroque-style chord movements.
Those chord progressions are a very Bach thing to do. Sequences like that mean you can bring in the harmonic minor scale – ultimately, they're melodic and help break you out of the standard blues or metal feel. Of course we had a big guy come out of Sweden once upon a time who specialised in that – and I really loved Yngwie's early stuff. It's good to have that influence in there, but not too much. I just use it as another flavour because Arch Enemy is a kind of hybrid situation for me as a guitar player. We're not focused on just one thing – there will be riffs from my death metal days, plus old school influences like Iron Maiden or Judas Priest. They're all different flavours I picked up along the way.

Where does your fascination with classical music stem from?
I guess it all started in my childhood. My mother's favourite music is classical and we'd listen to the great composers. She wanted me to know my stuff! But then later I got into rock, metal and punk – that became my rebellion!

Your leads often mix bluesy pentatonic phrases with searing diminished runs. Which guitarists rubbed off on you most?
I loved what Dave Mustaine was doing on Megadeth's *Peace Sells...* record because that was when I was learning how to play lead stuff. I'm a big Michael Schenker fan, too. Those were the 80s players taking guitar to new levels when I was growing up. I've always loved Adrian Smith from Iron Maiden, who inspired a lot of our modal minor runs. I actually play quite soft, I'm not as aggressive as people might think. It sounds aggressive because I use a hard pick, but I have a very soft touch. I don't like to thrash my guitar too much, I prefer to explore the dynamic range. I'm less into every note sounding the same. I prefer to be a bit more sexy with my phrasing and vibrato!

You signed with Dean guitars back in 2008. We're guessing Schenker may have had something to do with that?
Probably! I figured if they are good enough for him, they'd work well for me! At the time, Dave Mustaine was playing them as well, so it made sense for me to trust in them. The first guitar they gave me was actually a Schenker V in black and white. It sounded great. I didn't like the neck profile that much at first but I did eventually get used to it. More importantly the tone was incredible. I loved the string-thru body, which helped get this really nice sustain. It felt like a big step up for me when I started playing those guitars.

In the videos for the new singles, you're seen playing your Tyrant Tin Man, Burgundy and X Splatter signatures. What else are we hearing on the record?
I'm a big fan of the Marshall JCM 800 2205 50-Watt head and

there's one I own which is an especially magical amp with this crazy tone to it. But on this new album, for the first time, I didn't use that head. I used an Engl for most of the recordings. I did the rhythm tracks through a Kemper or plug-in and then we re-amped the clean signal at the end. It's different to the old days where you'd search for your tone and then have to commit to it. Technology has made the recording process more open-ended. For the leads and melodies, I prefer to go into a real studio and mic everything up in stereo. The solos come out better that way – the sound of a real amp will influence my next note or lick. I'll also bring out my favourite pedals like MXR Phase 90 and my Boss Dimension C chorus pedal for extra depth.

What kind of exercises helped get you to where you are as a player?

The funny thing about us guitar players is that we're all still playing those same pentatonic scales we grew up with! It's not really about getting better, it's just about keeping those skills so that they don't fade. I played along to a lot of records growing up. There was no Internet in the 1800s! You couldn't see what people were doing, it was more like something magical from another world. Somebody in my village would figure out how to do the Gary Moore thing, where you slide mute with your picking hand while pulling off to create these

"I DON'T PRACTISE OR WRITE... I JUST PLAY!"

rolling harmonics. And we'd all be like, 'Oh sh*t, that's how you do it!' You'd share secrets and rumours about what gear our favourite guitarists were using. And hearing Metallica and Megadeth made me realise I needed to lock in more!

Like Metallica and Megadeth, your riffs can often be as challenging as the leads...

That constant picking is a big part of my sound. I did all the rhythm tracks for the album. Our other guitarist Jeff Loomis is a highly accomplished player and even he tells me he struggles with riffs sometimes, because it's a merciless onslaught of fast picking. He would probably say the riffs are harder than the solos! I love the sound of a palm-muted chug. I played in Carcass in the early 90s and I picked up a lot from Bill Steer. His technique was great for that. Playing riffs really tight became my main way of practising and doing it all by ear was how I learned. I think it helped!

And do you still practise?

I'm a self-taught player, so when I hear something in my head I will keep playing until I get there. And sometimes I might stumble across things from just noodling around. I still play guitar for several hours every day. I don't practise or write... I just play! I'll collect all these small parts: random riffs, chord progressions or melodic ideas, and then start piecing together. Occasionally it might even be a full song in one go.

Words Grant Moon

BLACK SABBATH
BLACK SABBATH

(1970)

How the young Tony Iommi harnessed the evil power of the flattened 5th to create the most influential metal song of them all

The story goes that when Black Sabbath were jamming material in their early days, bassist Geezer Butler was noodling around on the main theme of *Mars, The Bringer Of War*, from Holst's *The Planets*. He played the tonic note (G), the 5th (D), then, crucially, the flattened 5th (D♭) that gives Mars its dissonant, menacing feel. With his ears pricking up, the band's guitarist Tony Iommi then adapted it – G, G an octave up, then that nasty D♭ in between – thus minting the riff for *Black Sabbath*. The opening song on their 1970 namesake debut album, the band's self-titled song would not only define them, but also the crunching sound and doom-laden occult atmosphere that legions of metal bands have explored ever since.

Emerging from the 60s blues/psych rock scene, Sabbath hit upon their own musical mood. The Summer Of Love had cooled and drained of colour, and into the 1970s there were new, darker places to explore. A storm was coming, and Black Sabbath opened with rain, thunder, and a tolling bell. Stark, powerful and heavy as hell, the song dripped with drama, with Butler, Iommi and drummer Bill Ward giving their captivating singer Ozzy Osbourne space to tell of a man visited by a terrifying demon ("A black shape with eyes of fire").

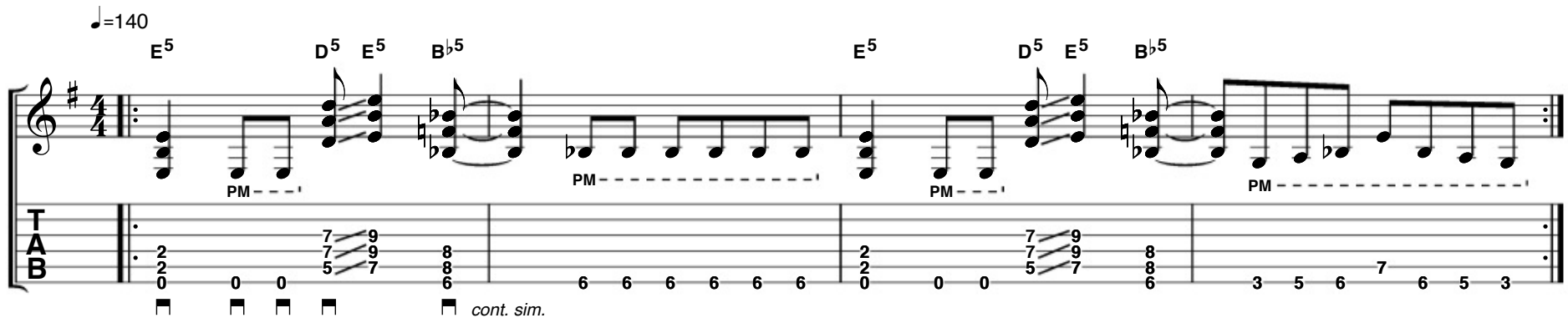
And that riff fit the Satanic story perfectly. With Butler doubling him, Iommi played it on his P90-equipped Gibson SG Special, through a 100-watt Laney head and 4x12 stack. In his hands, that flattened 5th had never sounded so damn *evil*, and his occasional hammer-on/pull-off trills between that and the natural 5th (D) rammed the point home.

The relationship between the I and ♭5 stretched back into musical history, past Holst and into the Middle Ages. Once called 'the devil's interval', it became a regular sound in jazz and blues (the ♭5 being the 'blue' note in the blues scale). It cropped up regularly in the work of the British blues explosion bands to whom Sabbath owed a debt. It's in the opening riff to Hendrix's *Purple Haze* and Cream's *Sunshine Of Your Love* (as well as Led Zeppelin's *Heartbreaker* and, later, Deep Purple's *Smoke On The Water*). But while the ♭5 was usually used as a passing note, in *Black Sabbath* it was central to the riff, the note to which the other two led. Played slowly, heavily and in parts, ear-shatteringly loudly, it was crucial to the sound and the aesthetic of the band, and the genre they helped spawn.

The ♭5 sound is everywhere in metal now – in Slayer's *Seasons In The Abyss*, Metallica's *Enter Sandman*, even the title track of the Osees latest, *A Foul Form*. That devilish tone suits metal's own subversive lore, but much of its early power was down to Black Sabbath themselves. They really were the full package. Tony Iommi's crunching tone has often been imitated but rarely surpassed, and this riff – on the title track of the album that started it all – is magic. Pure black magic.

THE ♭5TH INTERVAL

BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO



Try out the clashing sound of the ♭5th here in our tab example inspired by tracks like *Black Sabbath* and *Symptom Of The Universe*. The B♭ note is the all-important ♭5th – one semitone lower than the fifth note of the E natural minor scale (E F♯ G A B C D), hence the 'flattened 5th' moniker. The B♭5 chord also includes an F – another note that's not in the scale, and, being a semitone higher than the root note, adds even more dissonance.

Photo Getty

LIVE EVIL
Tony Iommi raising hell at the California Jam, April 6, 1974.

Words Grant Moon

ERUPTION

VAN HALEN

(1978)

The ultimate game-changer: a technique *tour de force* that inspired a million shredders, placing EVH in a category of one

By 1978 there had been a number of pivotal feats of solo guitar work, notably Jimi Hendrix's brutal, dive-bomb/feedback-heavy assault on *The Star Spangled Banner* at Woodstock in '69. Ritchie Blackmore, Jimmy Page and Tony Iommi had all pushed the instrument into new realms. But then Eddie Van Halen came along and shifted the paradigm for lead guitarists in rock, metal, pop – hell, for anyone playing an electric guitar in any musical field – with his showcase moment on his band's self-titled debut. It only lasts one minute and 42 seconds, but there was guitar playing before *Eruption*, and guitar playing after it.

Eruption was a litany of dazzling techniques that reset the standard, all performed with the incredible dexterity, speed, personality and the high-gain aggression that would characterise much of Eddie's work until his passing in 2020. He took pentatonic blues licks and played them legato style, with incredibly fast and fluid hammer-ons and pull-offs, often incorporating open strings and non-diatonic notes for flow. In some hands such notes might have sounded incongruous; in his, they made perfect sense. Every metal player needs a grasp of palm-muting, and he was the master.

His home-made 'Frankenstrat' was a Strat-bodied guitar armed with a gutsy Gibson PAF pickup, and it sounded alive whether emitting squealingly high artificial harmonics, or with the low E string dangling slack as he dipped the whammy bar of his Floyd Rose trem system as far as it would go.

Eddie's incredibly consistent tremolo picking was a vital part of his sound, notably 30 seconds into *Eruption* when – all on the high E string – he repeats a high E major figure three times before descending, landing on an F and so implying a very-metal Phrygian tonality, washed down with another whammy dive.

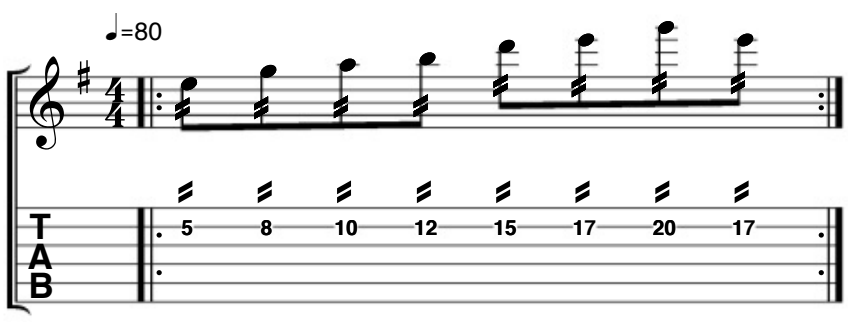
Two-handed tapping had existed in various forms long before this point, but here Eddie Van Halen took it to the stratosphere, and into the mainstream. His beautifully timed, cleanly played ascending triads (C#m, D#dim, E, C, D, E) had a darkly baroque sound, and showed what articulation and speed could be achieved in a rock/metal context with the technique.

And then there was his unmistakable sound. His Frankenstrat fed into a Marshall Super Lead, MXR Phase90 and Echoplex tape echo, which gave an edgy, massive sound that inspired legions of players, if not always to his liking. As Eddie once told The Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan: "When I used the stuff I invented, I was telling a story, while I felt that the people who were imitating me were telling a joke."

Metal players were among those who marvelled. Lifelong fan Dimebag Darrell would play his version of *Eruption* live. When Eddie died, Machine Head's Robb Flynn took to Instagram to play his take in tribute, saying, "Nothing will ever be as good as the original […] R.I.P. G.O.A.T. [Greatest Of All Time]." Slipknot singer Corey Taylor noted that Eddie had "influenced 40 years of musicianship".

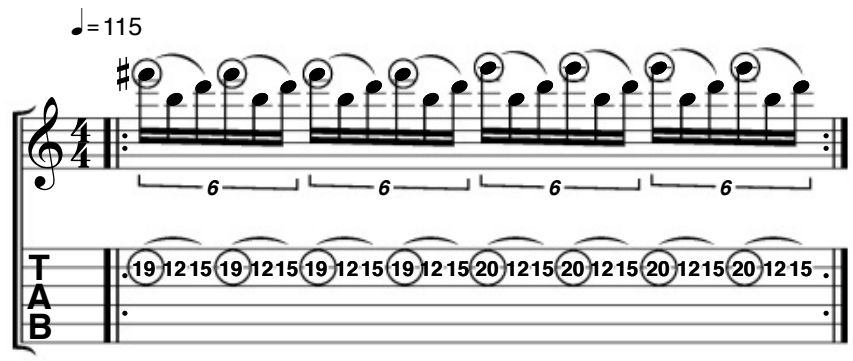
And it all started here. *Eruption* was the sound of the old rulebook being torn up, and a new one being written.

TREMOLO PICKING BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO



Arguably the greatest guitar workout of all time, *Eruption* features a multitude of techniques. For our tremolo picking idea aim for rapid-fire down-and upstrokes loosely timed to the tempo of the music.

TAPPING BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO



Another Eddie Van Halen trademark, this simple tapping lick will help you hone the technique. There are just two three-note phrases. Aim to 'flick' slightly off the string to sound the note clearly when you tap.

Photo Getty

ON FIRE
Eddie Van Halen on stage in 1978 in Lewisham – "the rock 'n' roll capital of the world!" according to Van Halen singer David Lee Roth.

BEASTIE BOYS
Dave Murray (left) and Adrian Smith in perfect harmony

Words Grant Moon

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

IRON MAIDEN

(1982)

A perfect example of twin-lead guitar dynamics – in an epic track from the album that elevated Maiden to legendary status

Iron Maiden's bassist and chief songwriter Steve Harris once said that, if someone had somehow never heard the band and wanted to understand what they were all about, then *Hallowed Be Thy Name* would be the song to play them. *Metal Hammer* magazine voted it Maiden's greatest song in 2017, and it's been a mainstay of the band's setlist for over 40 years.

And rightly so. The grand finale to 1982's *The Number Of The Beast*, arguably Maiden's greatest album, *Hallowed Be Thy Name* is a devastatingly effective combination of musical form and lyrical theme, delivered by a band at the top of their game, bubbling with chemistry and driven by the sheer onward force of metal. The relentless, dramatic tune tells the story of a man reflecting on his life as sits in his cell awaiting his execution ("Cause at 5 o'clock, they take me to the gallows pole/The sands of time for me are running low…"). Making his debut for the band on this album, Bruce Dickinson's soaring voice sells the doomed character's tragic story, Harris and drummer Nicko McBrain are the engine room, while guitarists Dave Murray and Adrian Smith deliver a textbook demonstration of how two guitars can, and should, work together.

From the subdued intro (complete with none-more-metal tolling bell) the pair mainly play harmony lines based on the song's E minor key, occasionally substituting that key's seventh degree of D with D# (giving an E harmonic minor feel). They harmonise in 3rds, so when one plays the line E, F#, G, B, the other is adding G, A, B, D. Their lead motifs function as a pedal point, with the galloping bass/chords (Em, C, D, Em) changing beneath, giving those same notes fresh harmonic flavour. This, and the song's dynamically delivered repetition, amps up the relentlessness of the piece, cleverly representing the narrator's rising fear as his inevitable fate draws near. The song is a masterclass in the power of repetition and build-up, and over the years Machine Head, Cradle Of Filth and Dream Theater have all taken a swing at it.

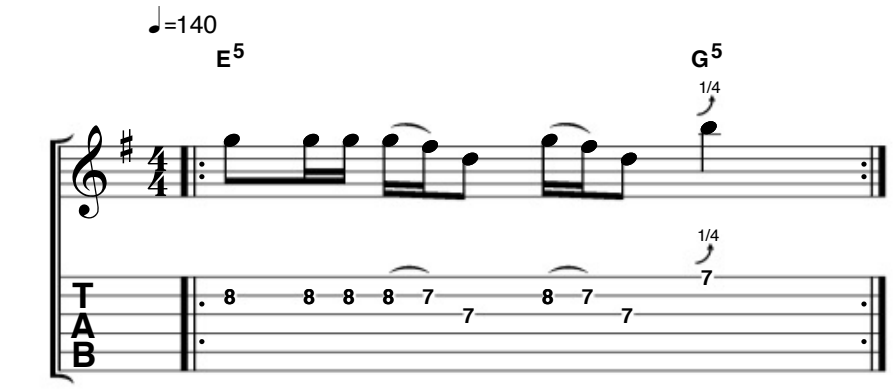
The beauty of the twin lead approach exemplified here is the sheer clarity of the sound, the orchestral articulation of each part that only two players can bring – no diads or doublestops here, just smooth, heavy lines. Then there's the bonus of both Murray and Smith throwing in a guitar solo each, in their contrasting yet complementary styles.

Of course, bands such as The Allman Brothers, Wishbone Ash and Thin Lizzy had made a virtue of having two guitarists before Maiden. Judas Priest also had their own brace of powerful guitar players in Glenn Tipton and K.K. Downing,. After them, the flood – Slayer, Metallica, Mastodon and countless other bands realised that the only thing better than one lead guitarist was two. For most, Maiden had shown them the musical and performance potential that the format could unlock, and *Hallowed Be Thy Name* remains a benchmark.

HARMONY LEAD LICK 1 BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO

Here we're looking at the very basics of Maiden style harmony. Tabbed above is a fairly simple lick. Aim for steady, even timing so that when you play the harmony part it all syncs together tightly.

HARMONY LEAD LICK 2 BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO



The idea here is to play the same lick as before but a 3rd higher in the scale. We're in E minor (E F♯ G A B C D), so where guitar 1 plays E, guitar 2 plays G. Where guitar 1 plays F♯, guitar 2 plays A, and so on.

Photo Getty

Photo Getty

MASTER OF PUPPETS METALLICA

(1986)

The mighty epic that elevated thrash metal to an art form – powered by "the best rhythm guitar player on the planet"

In early 1986, James Hetfield was in bullish mood, talking about the new Metallica album as it was being mixed at Amigo Studios in Los Angeles. "I know that on this album the fast ones are some of the fastest we've ever written," he told *Sounds* writer Steffan Chirazi. "We'd never try to forget what Metallica formed for, no way. It's just that maturity in style breeds better material all round."

The album in question was *Master Of Puppets*, and its title track was everything that guitarist/vocalist Hetfield promised. It was fast – 220bpm at peak velocity. It had a sense of artistic maturity in its epic scope and dramatic twists and turns, playing out over eight-and-a-half-minutes through several tempo and time signature changes. It was a guitar onslaught incorporating airtight staccato riffing, clean arpeggiated chords, harmonising twin-lead runs and a shredding, frantic solo from lead guitarist Kirk Hammett. And it would become an anthem for one of the most innovative and visionary metal bands of both the 1980s and of all time.

1986 was a landmark year for Metallica and their contemporaries from the thrash metal scene that had revolutionised heavy music in the early 80s. It was the year of Slayer's *Reign In Blood*, Megadeth's *Peace Sells... But Who's Buying?*, Dark Angel's *Darkness Descends*, Kreator's *Pleasure To Kill* and Destruction's *Eternal Devastation*. But in the three years since Metallica had kickstarted that revolution with their breakneck debut *Kill 'Em All*, they had broadened their sound and created in *Master Of Puppets* an album so ambitious and unique that their rivals were left playing catch-up.

During the *Puppets* tour, Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich told TG's Paul Elliott: "It's never been that pre-planned. We've just been following our own instincts, doing our own thing and letting it go in whatever direction feels natural. There's never been a specific attempt to create a new sound or anything – that just happens." But if the initial creative spark was as instinctual as Ulrich claimed, this was music crafted with a meticulous attention to detail. In the making of *Master Of Puppets*, Metallica's focus was razor-sharp. As Hetfield told Steffan Chirazi: "On a lot of numbers there are little things that demand a lot of attention. The album demands this sort of sh*t, man, and we know it'll make the difference."

36 years on, *Master Of Puppets* is widely regarded as Metallica's greatest album. In contemporary pop culture, the album's title track has had a new lease of life following its front-and-centre inclusion in Netflix's worldwide hit show *Stranger Things*, and in the band's recent summer shows it has served as the grand finale. But this monolithic track has been a pillar of the band's live set for decades. As of September 2022, Metallica have performed *Master Of Puppets* live more than any other song. And with good reason. From the definitive Metallica album, it is the definitive Metallica song.

It was on September 3, 1985 that Metallica began the recording sessions for *Master Of Puppets* at Sweet Silence Studios in Copenhagen, Denmark, with the studio's in-house engineer Flemming Rasmussen as their co-producer. And all these years later, as Rasmussen speaks to TG via Zoom to discuss the creation of that album and its classic title track, he's sitting right where it happened – in the control room at Sweet Silence, where he points behind him to the desk used for the recording. "It was a long time ago," he says. "But I remember it all so clearly..."

Metallica had made their second album *Ride The Lightning* at Sweet Silence with Rasmussen at the controls back in 1984, and it was Lars Ulrich who prompted that decision. As a fan of Ritchie Blackmore, the legendary guitarist of Deep Purple and Rainbow fame, Ulrich had loved the sound of Rainbow's 1981 album *Difficult To Cure*, produced by the band's bassist Roger Glover at Sweet Silence with Rasmussen as engineer.

"Before I started working with Metallica I didn't know anything about them," Rasmussen admits now. "But when I listened to *Kill 'Em All* I heard a lot of energy, for sure. And when I met them, I loved the attitude. It was Metallica against the world in those days. You see this attitude a lot in young bands but Metallica was beyond that – they had that drive and the chemistry between the four guys. We talked about *Kill 'Em All* and they were pretty stoked with it, but they didn't like the

sound of it. But they'd heard what I'd done with Ritchie Blackmore and they all loved the sound on that. So we scrutinised the guitar sounds from *Kill 'Em All* and my impression was it was good but I felt we could do a lot better – which I think *Ride The Lightning* proved."

There was one major problem during the recording of *Ride The Lightning*. Hetfield's modified Marshall amp had been stolen during a European tour. As a result, Rasmussen spoke to several Danish metal bands, including Metallica's friends in Mercyful Fate, who brought various amps to the studio for Hetfield to try out. "We had 10 or 11 Marshall stacks set up," Rasmussen recalls, "and James tried to figure out which of them sounded like his that was stolen."

Ride The Lightning was a real breakthrough – a big leap forward for Metallica artistically and also commercially, selling enough to secure the band a major label deal with Elektra in the US. In the wake of that success, it made perfect sense for the band to return to Sweet Silence and continue with Rasmussen as co-producer.

All of the material for *Master Of Puppets* was written and complete when the band arrived at the studio. "Metallica made pretty elaborate demos," Rasmussen says. "They worked with those cassette tapes of riffs and they'd stick the riffs together and take a part from one song and stick it into another song. So all of that was more or less done when we started on *Master Of Puppets*."

For much of this album, Hetfield was playing his iconic white Gibson Explorer (the standard ceramic humbuckers were replaced with EMG 81s in 1987), but the recording of one absurdly heavy track, *The Thing That Should Not Be*, saw him turn to a Jackson KV1 and down-tune for the first time. His watertight distortion was achieved not with FX – "the last time I used a distortion pedal was on *Ride The Lightning*," he noted in 1992, "and it was hell!" – but from the molotov cocktail of a Mesa/Boogie Mark II C+ rewired as a preamp, and a 100-watt Marshall power amp with 4x12 cabs.

On lead, Kirk Hammett was more relaxed about effects, favouring an Ibanez Tube Screamer and a Dunlop Cry Baby, and fell back on his old axes, including a Gibson Flying V and a Fernandes Strat copy with a Floyd Rose.

Like Hetfield, Hammett was also in thrall to the fusion of Mesa and Marshall. "Boogie made those heads for a short time in the mid 80s," he told Guitar World. "There's something about Boogie Mark II C heads that was really unique and very individual in their gain stages and sound. Most of Master of Puppets was tracked with Boogie heads and Marshall heads combined."

Elaborating on the album's amp sound, Rasmussen explains: "On this album they got the Mesa/Boogie endorsement, so they all played with five-band EQ. They got these new amps and they were all stoked, but when we tried them out, we thought, '...what the f*ck?' You twist the knobs and when you turn up the table you expect more top, right? But it was more or less the opposite. So we really messed around a lot with them.

THUNDER AND LIGHTNING
Cliff Burton (left) and James Hetfield during the *Ride The Lightning* tour.

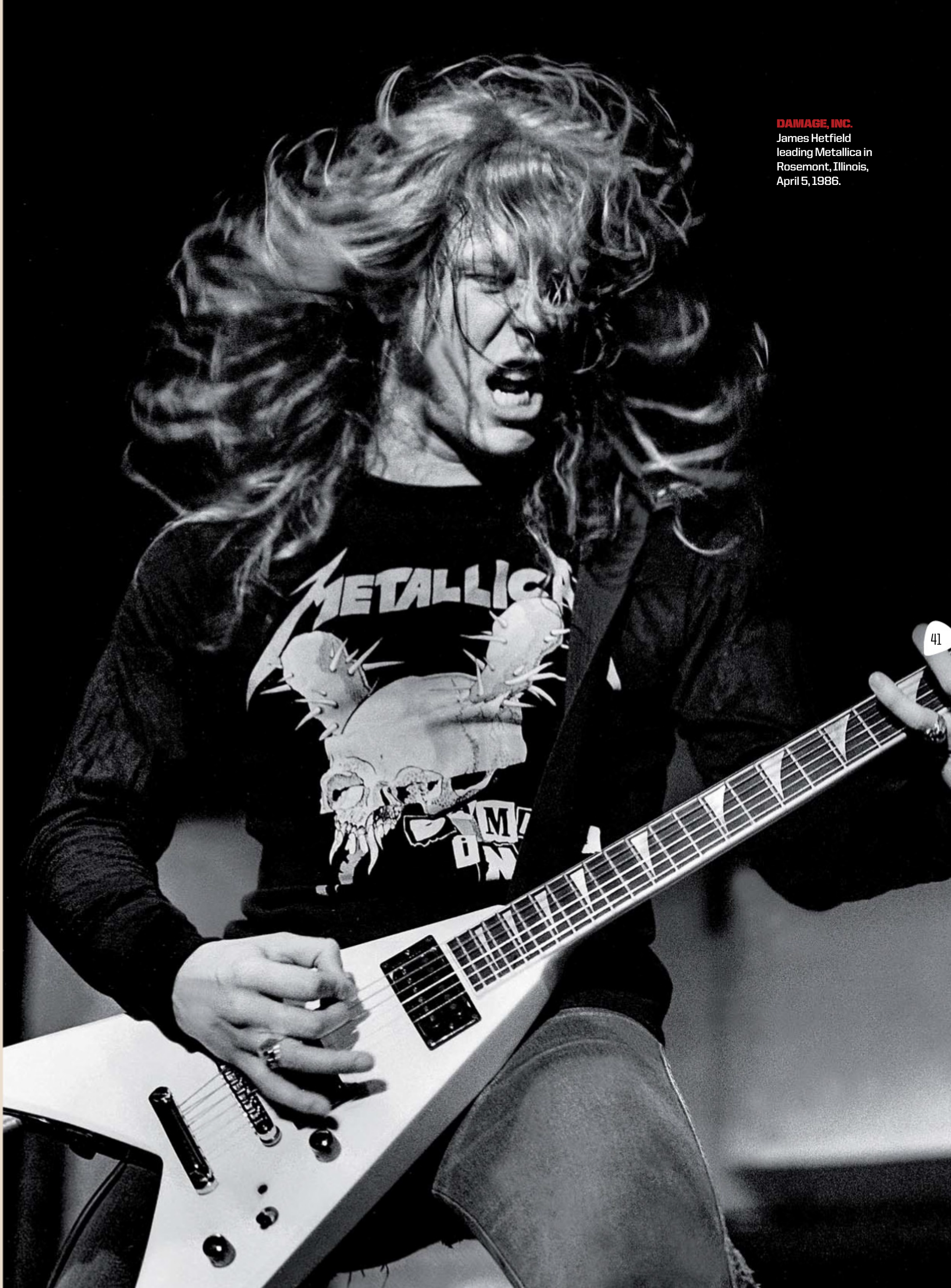
He continues: "We set up these Mesa/Boogie amps and we hooked up their new cabinets. I think we used two different cabinets on all the guitars. I used a variety of six mics on each guitar. I had two Shure SM57s right in the cone. I had two BMKs – they're called DPA now, a test mic by a Danish company – I used them for room mics, so there's one room mic on each cabinet. And on top of that I used AKG Gold tubes, in a 45-degree angle out from each cabinet, 3 or 4 feet away. So 3 mics on each cabinet, and every time we did a new part I'd fiddle with these mics till we got the right sound."

Rasmussen worked on three Metallica albums – *Ride The Lightning*, *Master Of Puppets* and 1988's *...And Justice For All*. And as he says now: "All the albums I did with Metallica were recorded on 24 track analogue tape. There's not a computer in sight, so there's no editing – everything is played. So we only had the 24 tracks in principle, but we used a synchroniser so we had 46 tracks available. You'd do the drums and once they were done you'd start doing the rhythm guitars. I was always waiting to put the bass on till after the rhythm guitars, which is very important in metal music which is guitar riff-based. The bass player has to adjust to the riff the guitar is playing – not the other way round. So we didn't record the bass until after the rhythm guitars, which was good in the case of Cliff [Burton, Metallica bassist until his death in September 1986], because he was a player who played to what he heard."

Metallica's studio process was notable for Hetfield recording rhythm tracks for both himself and Hammett to ensure the intricate riffing was matched to millisecond perfection. As Rasmussen explains: "On the albums I've done, James played all the rhythm guitars. Kirk doesn't play a single rhythm

"JAMES IS PLAYING HIS RHYTHM PART, THEN HE'S DOUBLING HIS OWN RHYTHM PART ON KIRK'S EQUIPMENT" PRODUCER FLEMMING RASMUSSEN

Photos Getty



DAMAGE, INC.
James Hetfield leading Metallica in Rosemont, Illinois, April 5, 1986.

FAST FRIENDS
Kirk Hammett and James Hetfield backstage during the *Master Of Puppets* tour, July 13, 1986.

guitar on *Master Of Puppets*. We'd set up James's gear and Kirk's gear and James would alternate between the stacks to do the parts. Most of the main guitars started out on James's Firebird and then we would swap guitars all the time. Most times we would start with James's rhythm guitar, with two tracks in stereo, so we had the main guitar. We would then dub that on one track playing on Kirk's equipment, which was sometimes a power amp and one Marshall pre-amp. So we had two double-tracked rhythm guitars doing James's part, and then he would play Kirk's part on Kirk's guitar."

He adds with a broad smile: "James can strum to anything. He's the rhythm master. He's tight as f*ck. That was never a problem. I rate James as the best rhythm guitar player on the planet. He's unbelievable."

On recording the iconic title track, Rasmussen remembers: "There's a lot of melodies in there, and depending on what we needed we would do six, eight, 12 tracks of melody guitars. James is playing his rhythm part, then he's doubling his own rhythm part on Kirk's equipment, then he plays Kirk's parts on Kirk's equipment and then he goes back to his own gear and double tracks Kirk's part with his sound. So we've got four rhythm parts, two James and two Kirk, all played on different guitars."

Whilst Hetfield was taking care of the track's complicated and extremely technical rhythm parts, Hammett would be writing and perfecting his lead parts. "Kirk would have a lot of spare time," says Rasmussen. "They were all hanging around the studio while we were recording. It was very rare that I was there alone. There was not a lot they could do in Copenhagen in winter. So Kirk would sit in the TV room, composing his solos while we recorded rhythm guitars and drums. It would be me, Lars and Kirk, and [Kirk] would play the solo he'd composed. Some of the solos are really long. Lars especially had ideas of how it had to be, like, 'We want a Ritchie Blackmore-type thing here.' Lars has a huge knowledge of music."

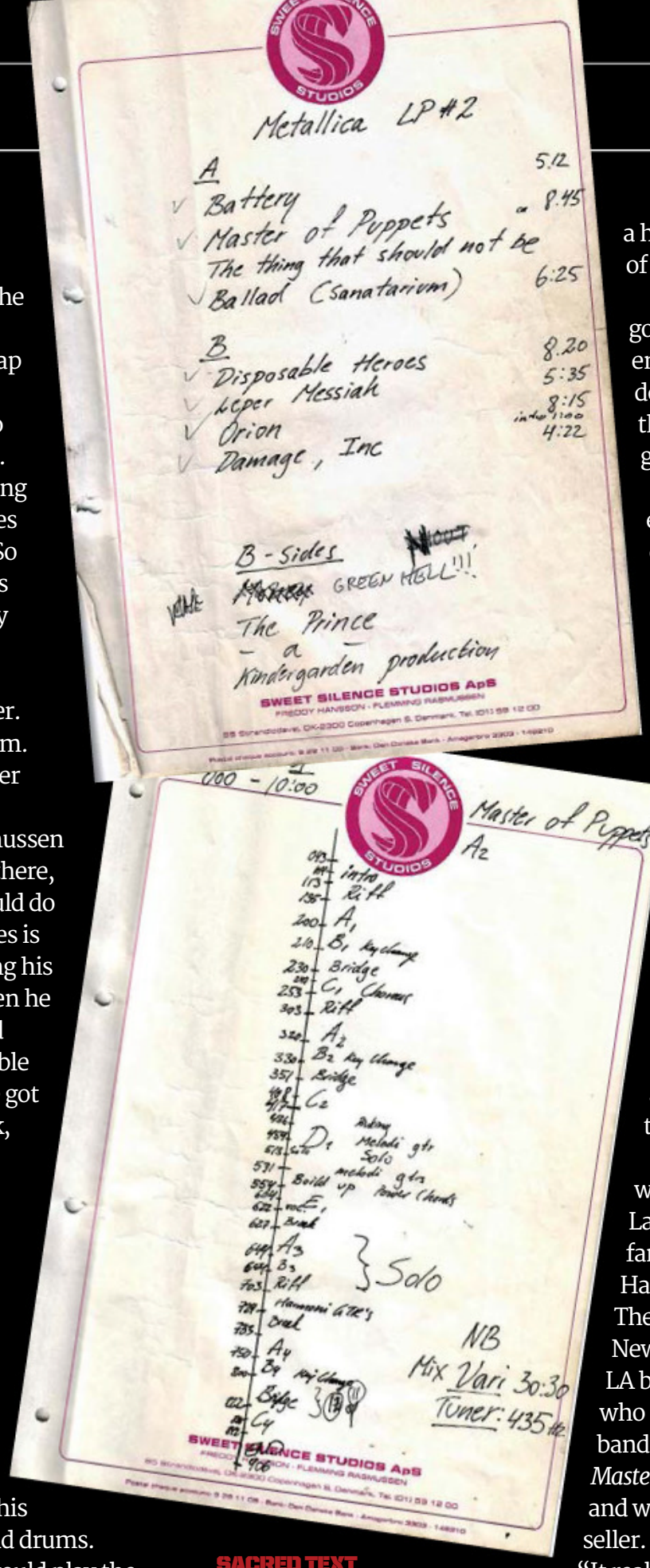
He adds: "Kirk's solo, going from beginning to end, we would punch in. He'd do it bit by bit – so that he got the performance that he wanted and we wanted. Kirk's a damn good guitar player."

As for pedals, Rasmussen notes: "We tried everything we had. The set-up was pretty elaborate on the Boogies. I had a studio parametric EQ inserted at the back so I could sculpt the tone in the control room. The amps were in the control room and we had the cabs out in the studio [room]. On top of what was going on on the amp I had inserted a studio EQ."

And the distinctive twin-lead harmonies that lead the song's middle-eight section? "Most of that was Kirk playing," Rasmussen says. "On some of the solos we have a wah coming in and going out again, so obviously we used a wah pedal, but for distortion we probably had Tube Screamers and whatever I had lying around – Marshall boosters, all sorts of stuff. But we would boost the amps quite a bit, so a lot of the distortion would come from the amp."

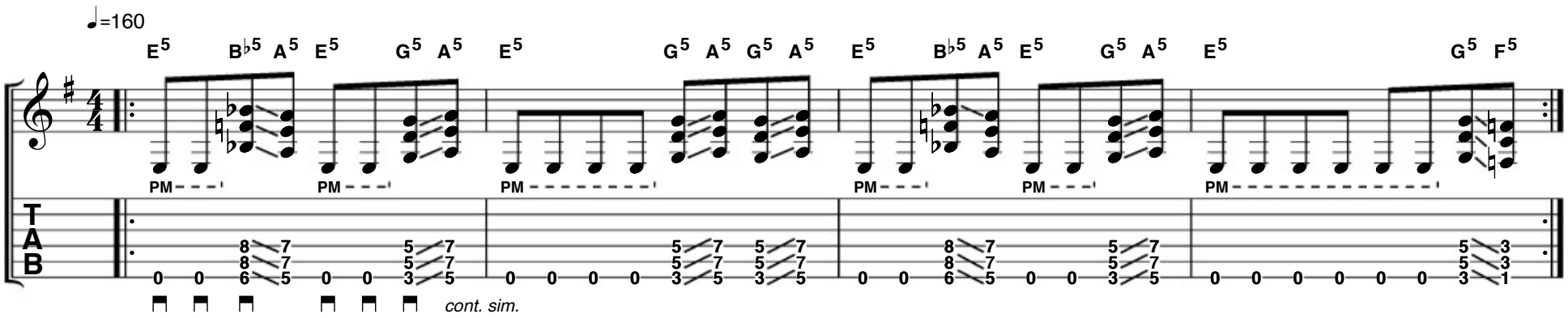
The recording of *Master Of Puppets* finally wrapped on Christmas Day morning, 1986. Lars Ulrich enjoyed the festive period at his family's home near Copenhagen while Hetfield, Hammett and Burton flew back to California. The band reunited for a gig in San Francisco on New Year's Eve before the album was mixed in LA by Michael Wagener, the German producer who had worked on hit records for various metal bands including Motley Crue, Dokken and Accept. *Master Of Puppets* was released on March 3, 1986, and went on to become Metallica's first million seller. As Flemming Rasmussen says in conclusion: "It really is an amazing record."

One question remains. How exactly do you learn to play such a behemoth of a track as *Master Of Puppets*? While there is no singular answer, a wise approach would be to start slow,



SACRED TEXT
Master Of Puppets recording notes made by producer Flemming Rasmussen.

PALM-MUTING AND SLIDING POWERCHORDS **BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO**



Metallica's James Hetfield is one of the finest rhythm guitarists in the history of metal. Our example uses his trademark combination of palm muting and sliding powerchords as inspiration. Again the exclusive use of downpicking is essential for an authentic feel.

Photos Getty / Flemming Rasmussen

taking your time to master (ahem) each section one at a time before moving on.

Master Of Puppets starts with stabbing powerchords which lead to a chromatic riff. Alternate picking and palm-muting should help the notes pop out more clearly. This is followed by a second riff that uses the fifth and sixth strings. The verse features sixth-string chugging and powerchords, including B♭5 – a ♭5 interval away from E (E-B♭). The end of each four bars concludes with a bar that is easier to feel than count, pushing the rhythm onwards.

The pre-chorus section enters at bar 80, and features more powerchords plus a short lead fill that's based around E natural minor (E F# G A B C D). This section concludes with a harmony line, diatonic 3rds apart, using B Phrygian Dominant (B C D# E F# G A). The chorus then begins at bar 98, with more stabbing powerchords, and driving palm-muting. This section also swaps between time signatures of 6/4 and 4/4.

The song's curveball mellow instrumental sequence enters at bar 184 and starts with clean arpeggiated chords. At bar 194, a twin-lead harmony section is introduced that uses arpeggios diatonic to E natural minor, with a short melody using B Spanish phrygian over the B7 chord. After this, a short lead solo enters at bar 204. The tricky second solo begins at bar 252, with a fast arpeggio pattern. Although Kirk prefers to pick every second note, you may find it easier to do a pull-off. This leads to some fast tremolo picking, but don't be too pedantic about this.

> "MATURITY IN STYLE BREEDS BETTER MATERIAL ALL ROUND"
> JAMES HETFIELD

Believe or not, Hammett actually fluffs a note in the first solo, where he pulls the E string clean off the fretboard of his Jackson Randy Rhoads V. It's the only mistake that made the cut. "We heard it back, and I was like, 'That's brilliant! We've gotta keep that!', he told *Guitar World*. "Of course, I've never been able to reproduce that since."

Bar 260 features a screaming harmonic fretted near the 3rd fret, third string, which is raised and lowered with the whammy bar. You'll need a lot of distortion for this lick to sustain. After bar 262's lick, based around a bluesy F# minor pentatonic idea, there's more fast-picked E natural minor lines. At bar 268 the F# section is introduced, which features a fast loop pattern based around F# minor pentatonic, with an added second (F# G# A B C# E).

The solo concludes with an ascending unison bend figure, as well as a wailing bend at the 22nd fret on the first string, with whammy bar vibrato. After the third and final chorus, the song concludes with the main verse riff – the truly creepy ending featuring backwards guitar parts swimming through the mix. "To get them I played a bunch of guitar parts that were in the same key as the song and laid them down on quarter-inch tape," Hammett told *Guitar World*. "Then we flipped the tape over and edited it, so we had two or three minutes of backward guitar. We put it in the last verse."

Ultimately, *Master Of Puppets* stands tall as a true classic. Few if any meal bands have ever come close to its genius. Now, if only we could nail Hetfield's infamous all-downstroke picking technique at 220bpm. Back to the TG practice room we go...

MASTER BLASTERS Metallica in 1986. From left: Cliff Burton, Lars Ulrich, James Hetfield, Kirk Hammett.

Photo Getty

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FROM HELL
Dimebag rides the lightning

Words Amit Sharma

COWBOYS FROM HELL

PANTERA

(1990)

The reinvention of Pantera: how the band found its groove and a new level of heaviness, and Dimebag became a guitar hero

Pantera had already released four albums by the time they got to major label debut *Cowboys From Hell*, but this album's opening title track would serve as the band's mission statement for a new era of brutality in the 90s. Phil Anselmo had taken over from original singer Terry Glaze on previous album *Power Metal*, which saw a shift from glammy hair metal to Judas Priest-inspired heaviness. But it was on *Cowboys From Hell* that the band homed in on the groove metal sound they would become known for – a sound which would inspire generations of heavy bands to come.

For the recording, guitarist Dimebag Darrell used his 1981 blue Dean From Hell guitar fitted with a Bill Lawrence XL500 pickup in the bridge and a Seymour Duncan '59 in the neck through his solid state Randall RG100H, with the mids dialled out for an aggressive scoop.

Often incorrectly tabbed around the 7th fret, the title track's opening riff is played an octave up at the 12th position, snaking through the E minor pentatonic scale with an added blue note on the 13th fret of the fifth string. That same idea gets transposed down to open position, before a palm-muted idea riding off the low E string leads into the verse sections – using the groove and swing of the rhythms rather than the note choices to create an intoxicating, swaying sense of heaviness. Chromatics are employed in places to add to the tension – three ascending notes on the A string in the verses as well as the more intensely strummed palm-muted powerchords in the bridge. There's also a sense of chromaticism to the riff for the solo, an E powerchord is followed by a C that climbs to C#m and D, allowing Dimebag to run wild with some of the note choices in his leads.

The are many reasons why this is considered one of his greatest solos – from the simplistic opening line which, much like the main riff itself, gets transposed over to a different area of the neck to the more outside-sounding and technically ambitious runs using the 11th, 12th and 15th frets across all six strings. The legato stretches get even wider from there, to the point where they almost sound like they're tapped, before Dimebag reverts back to his opening lick using the flat 5th against the root and a few bluesy phrases in the same area high up the neck. To end his solo, he plays chromatically ascending 6th intervals on the highest strings, climaxing with one final thunderous bend on the 22nd fret.

The riff that follows uses double picked palm-muted low E chugs against a higher octave and minor 7th, ending each cycle with a pinched harmonic on the 5th or 7th fret of the D string, and a descending line in E Dorian that gets played once and then twice an octave higher, delivered with no shortage of character and charisma. Its impact cannot be overstated – heavy metal would never be the same again.

GROOVE IN METAL **BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO**

Brutal tone and technical prowess are to be expected with Pantera, but here we're looking at a lighter aspect: groove – and the mix of rhythm and timing required. Before you play our tab example, listen closely to the eighth notes, 16th notes, and the triplets, too. You'll be swapping between these rhythms frequently, so aim to have a clear idea of how they sound before you start.

Photo Getty

Words Grant Moon

BLIND KORN

(1994)

With detuned seven-string guitars and a hip-hop influence in the mix, the boys from Bakersfield delivered the big bang of nu-metal

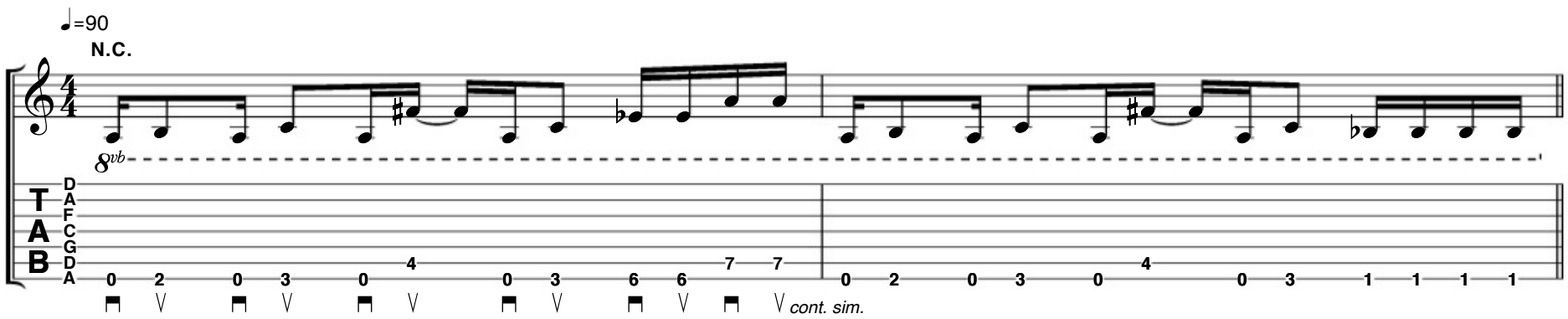
When Californian nu-metal pioneers Korn released *Blind* as their debut single in 1994, they were well aware they'd created something bold, powerful and new. That said, even by their own admission, they had no idea it would start a whole movement of heavy bands from the mid-90s onwards. And a sizeable amount of that sonic originality could be attributed to the instruments in the hands of guitarists James 'Munky' Shaffer and Brian 'Head' Welch – the very same Ibanez Universe seven-strings which had been co-designed by Steve Vai a few years prior, although rarely seen outside of the world of shredders.

As Munky put it, *Blind* "hit people over the head with the sound of detuned seven-string guitars" in a way that was "like nothing they'd ever heard before". But it needed the right introduction – the kind of thing that would have first-time listeners perched nervously on the edge of their seats, drowning in the all-encompassing suspense and unable to process what might be coming next. "I specifically remember we wanted listeners to be really taken off by starting really small," Munky revealed. "So, we thought let's start really unusual with the ride cymbal. Who starts a song with the ride cymbal?"

Then there's that scratchy D tritone chord that Munky repeats, with Head and bassist Reginald 'Fieldy' Arvizu responding in due course with their own individual lines. It's a musical conversation that takes the listener right into the band's sweaty practice room – like front row seats to witness a song coming to life. "There's that dissonant chord I do," Munky explained, "which is some D diminished whatever, played through an old Silvertone amplifier that was built into a case. By the time Jonathan [Davis] sings, 'Are you ready?', you're gonna get clobbered by this arsenal of giant guitars!"

Clobbered is certainly the right word for it. With their DiMarzio-equipped Ibanez seven-strings tuned an extra step down to ADGCFAD, the near-galactic weight of powerchords played down low turned Korn into one of the most talked about metal bands on the planet. To make their tones even more gargantuan, high gain Hughes & Kettner and Peavey amps were cranked for maximum muscle. It wasn't all just sub-sonic riffing, either – the Phrygian-flavoured verse sections, much like many of the band's anthems to come, would involve atmospheric lines for one of the two guitarists higher up the neck. And then of course there's the outro, which takes more cues from hip-hop than anything metallic, where guitars used more like a sound effect or sample, bearing closer resemblance to a police siren than a string instrument. As opening gambits go, few songs have encapsulated a band's greatness as precisely and succinctly as *Blind* did for Korn. Imitated but never duplicated, *Blind* was groundbreaking.

LOW-STRING RIFFS (SEVEN-STRING) **BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO**



We've tabbed our Korn-inspired riff in the band's signature seven-string A tuning (ADGCFAD). We're only playing on two strings, so you could in theory use a down-tuned six-string to play our riff – but some pickups can sound a bit woolly in this range. You need to strike a balance though: the loose flabby sound of the downtuned string is key to the nu-metal tone.

Photo Getty

MUNKY BUSINESS
James 'Munky' Shaffer pioneered the use of 7-strings for metal

Words Grant Moon Photo Anthony Scanga

EYELESS
SLIPKNOT
(1999)

In a brutal anthem as fearsome as the band's image, Mick Thomson created darkness and discordance with the guitar he couldn't live without

It wasn't a single, but *Eyeless* was the track that first got Slipknot noticed outside of America. Its inclusion as one of the last tracks on a *Kerrang!* covermount CD in March 1999 attracted much of this early attention, mainly thanks to the song's cross-genre appeal and brain-bursting heaviness, as well as the general sense of mystique surrounding a band comprised of nine mask-wearing unknowns. By the time they made their UK live debut at the end of that year, they were already headlining the 2000 capacity London Astoria venue and, suffice to say, they never looked back from there.

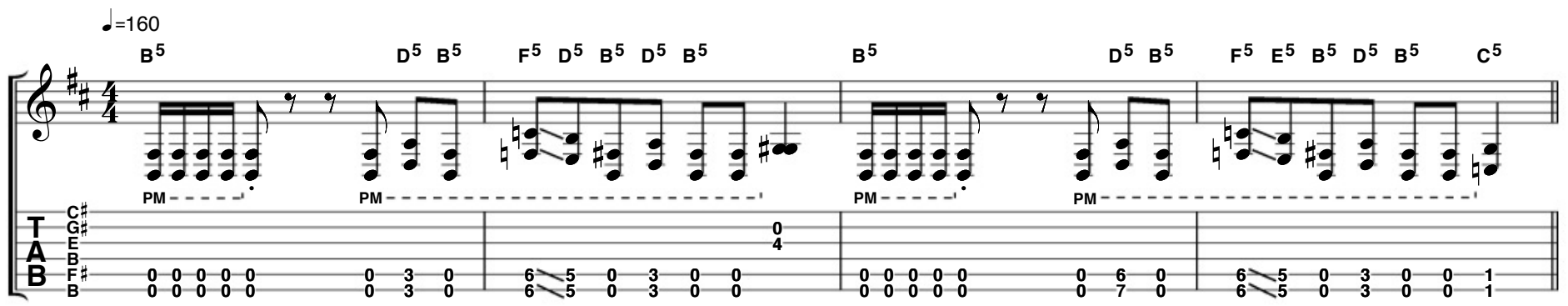
The guitars on *Eyeless* were recorded by Mick Thomson and early guitarist Josh Brainard, who left the group not long after the sessions and ended up being replaced by Jim Root. As it was their first record, Thomson has often noted how the group were "limited by finances" and it was a case of "use what you got". The majority of his tracking was done through a custom Jackson V with EMG pickups going into a Rocktron Piranha preamp and a Mesa/Boogie 295 power amp. He was teaching in a local guitar shop at the time, so borrowed a 31-Band Graphic EQ to run in the loop and help fine-tune those high gain tones heard in the final mix.

"That Jackson V was custom spec'd and built for me in the early 90s," Thomson told TG in 2017. "I actually wrote and tracked the first record with it. At the time, they didn't have a Jackson with 24 frets and a Floyd; they only did 24-fret hardtails. So I had to order a custom, taking out a three-year loan to have the f*cking thing made."

Still to this day, it remains one of the guitarist's most prized possessions. "It was my baby," he said. "I couldn't have it stolen or damaged. The neck is what makes it extra special – it's almost as fast as those original Wizards in feel but sounds thicker and better. Honestly, I think if I could only keep one of my guitars, it might have to be that one."

As for the riffs and melodies that made *Eyeless* one of Slipknot's most enduring anthems, the clashing diads played by Thomson during the intro were paramount in establishing the horror soundtrack-esque discordance they'd quickly become known for. What initially starts out as the same note played five frets apart on the two highest strings becomes twisted into something far darker by the note fretted on the fifth string being moved down a half step, creating an ugly, dissonant and ear-piercing clash. But its crowning moment comes towards the end of the song when a riff gets slowed into half-time after singer Corey Taylor screams "Mother f*cker!", dooming out with minor 2nd powerchords at the 1st fret and some extreme bends up to the flat 5th to create a swirling, mind-bending chaos unlike any other.

DROP B NU-METAL RIFFING **BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO**



We're in drop B tuning (B F♯ B E G♯ C♯) here in our Slipknot style riff. The 6th-fret F5 and the 1st-fret C5 were commonplace heavy metal intervals by the time *Eyeless* was released so make sure to take a listen to how they sound. The palm-muted B5 chords in bars 1 and 3 should sync tightly to the kick drum. Take care with your timing here.

HORROR SHOW
Mick Thomson on stage with Slipknot in Chicago, Illinois, November 16, 2000.

Words Jon Wiederhorn Photos Anthony Scanga

"Metal ...can go in a million different directions!"

The new **Slipknot** album is their most eclectic to date – with experimentation amid the fury. Guitarists **Jim Root** and **Mick Thomson** reveal all...

Jim Root puts it very simply. "We're not just playing metal songs," the guitarist says of the new Slipknot album. "There's so much more going on. There's orchestration, melodic vocals and screaming, piano and samples and all these layers and music styles."

The End, So Far may not be Slipknot's most accessible album, but it's arguably their most eclectic, with ambient, effect-laden sounds colliding with chuggy, downtuned riffs, and tempos reeling from sluggish to torrential, often in the same song. This album, like its predecessor, 2019's *We Are Not Your Kind*, is a schizophrenic hybrid of raging riffs, pop hooks, rhythmic variation and atmospheric interludes.

Many songs have the aggression and intensity of Slipknot classics such as *Pyschosocial*, *People = Sh*t* and *Duality*. However, the new album opens with *Adderall*, a melancholy, cinematic cut redolent of Radiohead and Trent Reznor. Elsewhere, *Medicine For The Dead* blends industrial noises into a melange of evocative arpeggios, clanking xylophones and palm-muted guitar chugs, while *De Sade* intertwines militaristic beats, a honey-sweet chorus and glistening guitar shards with shreddy leads.

The End, So Far was a challenging album to make, not least because Root, one of the band's principal songwriters, was struggling with his mental health. "When the pandemic happened, I was home alone," he recalls. "I got depressed. Guitars were depressing me. Everything was depressing me. Previously the guitar was an outlet for me to escape stuff, but this time it just reminded me of all the things that I wasn't able to do because of Covid. So, this positive force in my life turned into this negative thing, which would've been absolutely f*cking horrifying if I hadn't been able to pull myself out of it. But now I pick up a guitar and I'm like, 'What would I do without this?'"

The band's other guitarist, Mick Thomson, spent the downtime during quarantine doing what he loves best – modding. "I played a bunch for sure, but my mental getaway comes from fixing sh*t and modifying stuff," he says. "It's always therapeutic for me to be doing something with guitars. I've got pedals all over my dining room table. There's guitars all over the floor. I just work on sh*t and experiment and play. I'm always putting pickups in something or swapping out a bridge, just messing with stuff, adjusting the action and the intonation. And as soon as I'm done working on something, I'll plug in and play with it for hours."

The End, So Far was co-produced by the band with Joe Barresi, who mixed the last two Slipknot albums. And this time around there was more writing input from percussionist Shawn 'Clown' Crahan and bassist Allesandro 'Alex' Venturella.

In this expansive interview, Jim Root and Mick Thomson discuss the making of *The End, So Far* – the setbacks, the wild gear experiments, the whammy-bar high jinks and much more...

SOUND

Jim: We're still trying to evolve as a band, and I'm trying to evolve as a songwriter. Our sound comes in part from constantly changing up the formula. I just wish some of these songs on this new record had the chance to evolve a little bit more. Now that we've been away from the recording process for a few months, I'm like, 'Sh*t, man, I have such a better idea now for that part. I wish I could re-record that thing.' Or: 'I have this riff that I think would fit better in that section.' And that's why when we play live, I'll improvise or add things into the songs.

Mick: There's all this talk about the vision for this record, but there's never a plan. Even if you think you know what's going on, unexpected things always happen. And you can overthink things until you don't know what you just did is any good. This album is looser and darker, but is it better? That's up to anyone's perception on any given day. There's days when I love a song and then another day I hate it. But that's what's cool about what we do. With this album I don't think we intentionally did anything to p*ss anyone off. But I know some people are gonna hate it, and I don't give a sh*t about what they have to say on the Internet about how much I suck!

SONGWRITING

Mick: A lot of it is taking a part and duct-taping it onto some other part. We're always dealing with multiple parts that come from totally different directions. That's just Slipknot. Something might start with a part someone demoed with [software] EZ Drummer. Another thing could come from riffs that were three years old that we jammed on. Everything filters through the band and gets rebuilt and constructed. But wherever it started, and whatever it goes through, it always turns into a Slipknot song.

Jim: I was majorly involved in the writing of *Vol. 3: The Subliminal Verses* and *All Hope Is Gone*. I wrote most of *.5: The Gray Chapter* and *We Are Not Your Kind*. With this record my contribution was minimal. Mostly, I helped shape and structure songs in the studio. It's a good thing we had Alex [Venturella] picking up some of the slack along with Clown, who's becoming a lot more involved in song arranging. But when I first heard a lot of the arrangements, I was kind of freaked out. I thought, 'Oh f*ck, this doesn't sound like Slipknot to me. We've got a lot of work to do.' What I heard was the symptom of having somebody that isn't in our age group and wasn't influenced by the same music. Alex was a Slipknot fan so he sounds like somebody that was influenced by Slipknot trying to write for Slipknot. But he is an amazing schooled musician and he had some good ideas, so we Frankensteined a couple of different parts between me, Alex and Clown, and things started to take shape. A lot of my arrangements were things I had been trying to do on my own, maybe for a solo album. There was one idea I had [for the track *Acidic*] that was really bluesy and I experimented with key

OUT FOR BLOOD Mick with his blood-red Jackson Dinky

"THIS IS THE FIRST TIME EVER ON A RECORD THAT I DIDN'T HAVE ONE GUITAR SOUND AS MY ATTACK TONE" MICK THOMSON

changes, which I don't normally do. And I found myself going back to playing a lot of speed metal and thrash metal riffs, and we recorded a lot of those. I handed the hard drives to our engineer and Clown and I said, 'Here's some stuff. See if you can do anything with these.' So it was a huge group effort.

RECORDING

Jim: We were flying by the seat of our pants! We had zero time for pre-production and it was like we were adding to this meal we were making as we were eating it. No one had rehearsed together. If we were gonna rewrite parts of the demos it was gonna have to happen right there on the spot as we were recording it. It wasn't my favourite way to make a record, but we had no choice – we had a budget and a schedule we had to stick to. But we tend to work well under pressure and we got a great record out of it.

Mick: It was really fun to experiment in the studio this time. We'd have something and then I'd throw a bunch of other different amps up and go, 'Okay, let's try this.' I would double a riff but then change it a little. Next thing I knew, that doubled riff was the main part with a totally different amp sound and my normal tone had disappeared. It was just a bizarro process. It was almost a backwards record from the way we've worked before.

INFLUENCES

Jim: It sounds like it's all over the place because our influences come from all over the place and we've evolved to the point where we can get that across in the songs. This band is such a cornucopia of different personalities and musical styles. Me and Mick are basically self-taught metal dudes. Corey [Taylor] can sing anything. Alex is schooled in music, Clown came from a more indie rock world, and everyone else is very artistic in their own way and they bring their own approach to the songs as well.

Mick: It shouldn't be too easy to digest or even categorize. When we did *Vol. 3: The Subliminal Verses*, I was listening to a burn of rough [mixes] in my car in Des Moines. The guys in the band Cephalic Carnage were playing in Des Moines that night, so I was playing the songs for one of the guys in the band and he was like, 'This is just so different. What is it? It's metal, but it's not metal. How do you define it?' And I said, 'Stop trying to f*cking nail it to a wall as something and just enjoy it as music!' You don't have to put yourself in a narrow type of pigeonhole, and that's what I love about metal more than a lot of other music. You can draw from a lot more places. Punk always sounds like punk, but metal can go in a million different directions.

LEADS

Jim: I have different phases of guitar playing that I go through. There's the woodshedding phase where your muscle memory is really great around the fretboard. And then you have your writing mode. For me, that's when I throw all the woodshedding and muscle memory out the window and focus on the songs and the riffs. And that's the phase I was in when we were recording. I'm kind of bummed because I was really out of practice when we tracked the record. I was insecure about playing the guitar and doing the solos. I was just like, 'Sh*t, why now?' If we had time, I'd like to go back and re-approach some of the solos.

Mick: We didn't write any of the solos. If there were any bigger, more involved leads, I probably would have sat down,

WHO'S PLAYING WHAT?

How to tell left from right with Jim Root and Mick Thomson

On album and on stage, Slipknot guitarists Jim Root and Mick Thomson work together as a team, both playing rhythm and lead. So, amid the firestorm of barrelling beats, pummelling percussion, screeching samples, DJ scratching and vocal acrobatics, how can you tell if a guitar part you're hearing is coming from Root or Thomson?

The easiest way is to pay attention to which direction the sound is coming from (this is easily accomplished with headphones). Root's parts are always in the left part of the stereo mix and Thomson's are always on the right. The same goes for their live shows. But what if the listener is cranking the band's tunes on a mono Bluetooth speaker? Well, there are other ways to tell the differences between the two players.

"We're really different kinds of players, but we complement each other really well," Mick says. "What isn't in my wheelhouse is in Jim's. He's more of a rock guy and I'm more of a technical metal player. He's got a great touch and plays legato, and I play some of the more offbeat stuff."

"I'm a liquid sort of organic guy," Jim explains. "And Mick is more like, 'Here I am. I'm gonna lay it down and it's in your f*cking face and it's gonna be powerful.' I like to mix alternate picking with legato and I'm a little bit more fluid than Mick. But Mick understands theory and tries to put it in place a lot more than I do. I'm more of an instinct player. Even if I play something out of key, I don't care because sometimes that sh*t works and creates something you wouldn't normally get."

There's a push-pull dynamic to Slipknot's guitar parts, of which Mick says: "I tend to rush stuff a little bit. I can be really on top of sh*t and pushing it, and Jim will lay back a little bit more. I have a more staccato, shorter, barky guitar attack and Jim's got a fatter, raw tone. His playing is a bit looser and mine's more tight. If we both played the same guitar, I think his chug would be a little bigger and fatter just from the way he holds his pick. And it's funny 'cause he plays with a lot more gain than I do."

Mick also says there is kind of telepathy between them. "When you play with somebody for long enough, you develop a seventh sense. Me and Jim know each other well enough that without thinking about it consciously, he automatically adapts to playing along with whatever I'm doing. I guarantee he can anticipate when a note's gonna come out of me, just as I can with him."

felt it out, built it and taken it someplace instead of recording a bunch of random, sporadic sh*t that came out of my brain once that afternoon and now has to stand the test of time. I bought a couple of Jackson Dinky guitars with whammies on Reverb.com and brought them into the studio. I even got a Jackson sustainer, so I went nuts with the whammy bar on a bunch of spots 'cause I was having fun. I've only played hardtails ever since we started recording. I literally drove to Simi Valley to pick up these guitars and then used them to record my solos.

PRODUCTION

Mick: The fact that Joe [Barresi] engineered the Kyuss records I always loved so much sold me on him. Joe's history with tones is unreal. And he has a certain openness to trying different things, which I loved. He got me to use a bunch of different passive pickups with great effect on a bunch of spots. So that's something I've reopened my mind to after 20 years. I play passives and stuff at home, but I wouldn't even consider taking a passive pickup guitar to go play metal in somebody's basement. But dialing that back a bit was fun because it forced me to really dig in. I've got a pretty heavy right hand anyway, so it's not much work for me to dig in more to get more out of those strings.

Jim: Joe is extremely knowledgeable about sounds. F*ck, listen to Tool [whose albums Barresi has engineered]. He knows how to get the best out of everyone. Working with him has made me go to my live rig, and me and my tech are reworking the sounds on my amps now. I'm gonna see if EMG can make me a passive style of pickup, like an HZ, which would have a different vibe from the compressed pickups I'm using right now. I'd like to dive a little deeper into that world and go back to the roots of everything – using an overdrive pedal to get that extra juice out of the amp instead of jamming the preamp gain.

WHITE HOT
Jim with his new Charvel Signature Pro-Mod San Dimas Style 1 HH FR

GEAR

Mick: I had so much fun experimenting with all the gear. It's more in your mind than in the pedals, but there are all these soundscapes that you can create in all these different ways. This is the first time ever on a record that I didn't have one guitar sound as my attack tone. And I had a different amp on every song – multiple amps on every song. And then there were all these other layers; we played with radically different amp combos. Joe's got a bunch of stuff, which is like a toy chest. And I've got lots of my own stuff, too. The funnest thing was putting together non-metal things – different combinations that wouldn't necessarily be your first choice for a metal tone – and then just playing the living sh*t out of them. There were times when I'd be playing heavy parts with a passive pickup guitar with a fairly low output into a Marshall 800 with an overdrive. I'd be picking real hard and it sounds like I have tons of gain on there but it felt damn near clean in my hands picking it. You have to beat the living sh*t out of it, and a lot of that translated in a great way. There's a lot of organic-ness all over the record that wouldn't have been there if I hadn't experimented with Joe. It made everything so much more fun.

"I THOUGHT, 'OH, F*** – THIS DOESN'T SOUND LIKE SLIPKNOT. WE'VE GOT A LOT OF WORK TO DO"
JIM ROOT

POWER TOOLS

Jim and Mick's current gear: amps, effects and more.

On the road, Mick and Jim meticulously keep track of what guitars they need to cut through the band's percussive clamour to achieve maximal punch.

For a long time, Jim has relied on Fender. He has three signature models: a Telecaster, a Strat and a Jazzmaster, and he used most of them on the band's last U.S. tour.

Since Fender owns Charvel, the metal guitar giant recently launched Root's Artist Series guitar, the Jim Root Signature Pro-Mod San Dimas Style 1 HH FR, which has seen plenty of live action. "When I was growing up, I was playing a lot of Charvels," Jim says. "I had a bunch of Model 5s and a Model 1. I got offered a signature Charvel without having to leave Fender, so I got real lucky. I don't know how lightning struck me in such a great way."

Jim feels so comfortable with Charvels that he made sure to play a few of his favourites when he was tracking solos for *The End, So Far*. "I have a great DK 24 with Full Shred pickups that I definitely used," he says. "It's a wood-grain colour with a roasted maple fretboard. I used a black one as well for a few of the guitar solos and a little bit of the third-guitar tracking."

Mick joined Jackson's artist roster in 2016 with a Custom Double Rhoads and his first Soloist model. Onstage, he plays his Pro Series USA Signature Mick Thomson Jackson Soloist SL2s and a Jackson prototype Dinky he hot-rodded with direct-mounted signature pickups.

"Seeing them brings me back to the time in the 90s when I was broke and in love with those guitars," he says. "They have bolt-on necks, which have a totally different kind of sound when you hit the strings than you get with a neck-through."

While Mick rocks the Dinkys on the road, they have become his go-to guitar when he's noodling at home. "I'm always grabbing them when I'm just sitting around," he says. "I've got a red one and a blood-red one, which I matched to my old B.C. Rich."

V FOR VICTORY
Brent Hinds with his Silverburst Flying V

Words Amit Sharma

MARCH OF THE FIRE ANTS
MASTODON
(2002)

Heaviness with a vast sonic range – achieved with an unorthodox approach to tuning and a classic sense of two-guitar harmony

There are numerous Mastodon tracks composed entirely out of top-tier riffs, from the early greatness of *Blood And Thunder* and *The Last Baron* through to more modern musings such as *Andromeda* and *More Than I Could Chew*. But, in many ways, it's the second track and only single from their 2002 debut *Remission* that felt like the first big taste of the sound they'd become known for and later expand upon – mixing elements of sludge, groove and progressive metal in ways few had ever dared to before them.

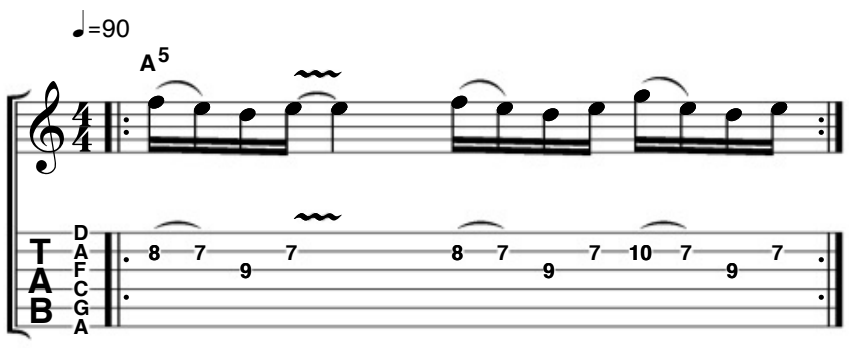
On *March Of The Fire Ants*, as well as other early tracks like *Where Strides The Behemoth* and *Mother Puncher*, they also helped popularise a tuning very rarely used in metal at the time, with the guitar dropped down a whole step and then the sixth string tuned all the way down to A. This allowed them to play standard powerchords on the two heaviest strings and produce a lower octave instead of the typical root and perfect fifth, deeply extending the lower range of their guitars without sacrificing much of the higher register, as would be the case from tuning all strings down in relation to that low A.

In *March Of The Fire Ants*, the first 50 seconds take full advantage of having two wildly talented players in the group, Bill Kelliher first allowing his chords to ring out through the pauses and then harmonising around the main riff played by Brent Hinds. They also layer up heavily during the interlude that follows the second chorus, the Iron Maiden-esque top line being doubled an octave up before a harmony playing the same idea seven frets down gets thrown in for good measure. The melodic stretch gives way to furious discordance in the section that comes next, dialling up the heaviness with arguably the song's most jarring riff – which once again uses the low A against higher open strings to cover a vast amount of sonic range and twist the ear in the most unexpected of ways.

Similarly, there are some really interesting clashes in parts of the verse, where Kelliher attacks the third fret of his third string as the two higher strings ring out open before eventually resolving one fret higher. He's purposefully drawing attention to the note that's out by a semitone and that's precisely what makes the part sound so atmospheric and menacing, later taking it to further extremes by playing the same kind of idea an octave up around the 15th fret.

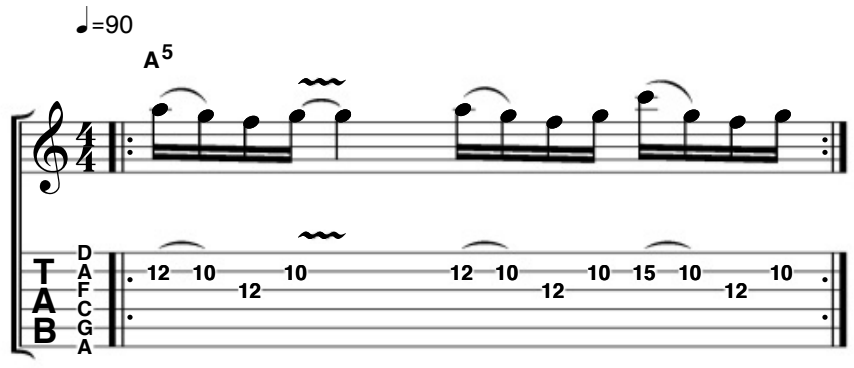
In the *March Of The Fire Ants* video, Hinds can be seen with the white Gibson Flying V he relied on heavily during their early years through a Marshall JMP while Kelliher can be spotting holding another old favourite, a Gibson Les Paul Custom Silverburst, going through a JCM series Marshall – which is most likely what we're hearing on the recording.

HARMONY GUITAR 1 (AGCFAD TUNING) BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO



Though Bill and Brent used a mixture of harmonies in *March Of The Fire Ants*, we're looking at a fairly simple idea here. Take note of the 10th fret G note on beat 4. We'll come back to that...

HARMONY GUITAR 2 (AGCFAD TUNING) BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO



All the notes here harmonise in diatonic 3rds with guitar 1 in the key of A minor. Except, that is, for the 15th fret C note on beat 4 which is a 4th interval above the G in guitar 1.

Photo Getty

Words Amit Sharma

THE HEAVIEST MATTER IN THE UNIVERSE

GOJIRA

(2005)

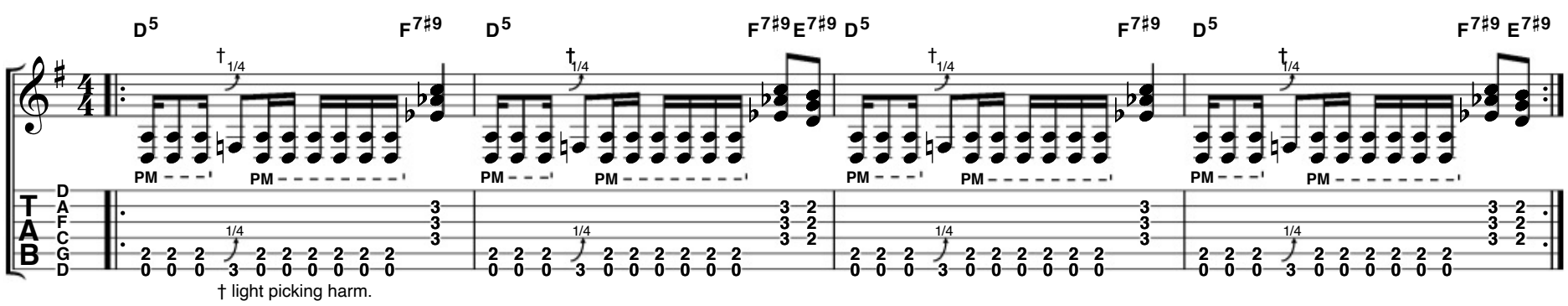
Disorienting rhythms, juggernaut grooves and pick scrapes. A defining moment in 21st century extreme metal

It takes a serious amount of guts to name a track *The Heaviest Matter In The Universe*, but in the case of Gojira, it's a musical quality that's never been doubted or questioned – the French quartet's take on extreme metal undoubtedly deserving of such brazen hyperbole.

This track from breakthrough third album *From Mars To Sirius* has served as a calling card of sorts, thanks to its head-twisting machine-gun rhythms and ferocious high gain thunder. With the opening riff evolving rapidly during its opening 15 seconds, there's a lot to take in over a short space of time – a smorgasbord of palm-muted chords, pinched harmonics and single-note lines. Every two cycles, notes that were triple picked might then be double picked with different accents or mutes, each succession of change feeling far from subtle and yet thrillingly familiar. Ultimately, however, they are all variations on a main theme that plays off the 3rd, 2nd and 1st frets as well as an octave shape based on the 2nd fret of the fifth string – in this case producing an A, as a result of Joe Duplantier and Christian Andreu's Jackson loaner (a US Soloist, later returned) being tuned a whole step down.

The main verse riff pairs triple picked and palm-muted single notes on the lowest string with more open-sounding chords on higher strings, treating the listener to the same kind of death metal intensities that inspired the band as young music fans. The heaviest part of the song arrives one minute and 50 seconds in when drummer Mario Duplantier switches to an even faster blastbeat as Joe and Christian Andreu switch to a halftime groove-based idea. What stands out most here is their usage of a pick scrape, where the plectrum is turned roughly 90 degrees towards the ground and then raked upwards across the strings with additional harmonics provided by the side of the thumb. On this particular track, the fretting hand rests on the harmonics between the 4th and 5th frets, although Gojira have been known to use sliding harmonics to further intensify the sound effect – one of their most career-defining trademarks. It's a great way of catching listeners off-guard and momentarily deviating from all the subterranean open-position riffing. Another key part of the song incorporates open-string pull-offs, using the fifth string – a low G – as a pedal tone against notes fretted higher and harmonised by both guitarists. Perhaps the main reason why *The Heaviest Matter In The Universe* ended up becoming one of Gojira's setlist staples is how seamlessly it ebbs and flows – despite the angular ferocity of its heavy chromaticism and jarring rhythms, it's all tied up in a way that makes perfect sense. A lot of that comes down to the Duplantier siblings, who cut their musical teeth together and ended up forging a creative relationship more complex and elaborate than that of your typical guitarist and drummer. *C'est magnifique!*

PALM MUTING AND CHORD STABS BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO



Gojira are masters of mixing up rhythms and delivering them with an exceptional level of precision. This example uses the relatively simple tuning of dropping all the strings down a full step. Mixing up the palm-muting and chord stabs provides a contrast in dynamics and is a good test of your technique.

Photo Getty

DEATH METAL
Joe Duplantier of Gojira, purveyor of "ferocious high gain thunder."

EIGHT-BALLER
Animals As Leaders' Tosin Abasi

Words Amit Sharma

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

ANIMALS AS LEADERS

(2014)

With two virtuosos playing eight-strings, the possibilities are limitless – as illustrated in this prime example of 'thumping'

As one of the leading names in the tech-metal revolution of the late noughties, *Animals As Leaders* quickly ended up becoming one of the most universally loved and respected instrumental acts on the planet. Negating any need for a bass player, guitarists Tosin Abasi and Javier Reyes employ eight-strings to cover a huge amount of sonic ground from the lowest low end to screaming lead tones high up the neck. In the process, alongside other bands like Meshuggah and Deftones, they've helped popularise the extended-range instrument – with Tosin now even running and endorsing his own company Abasi Concepts with great success.

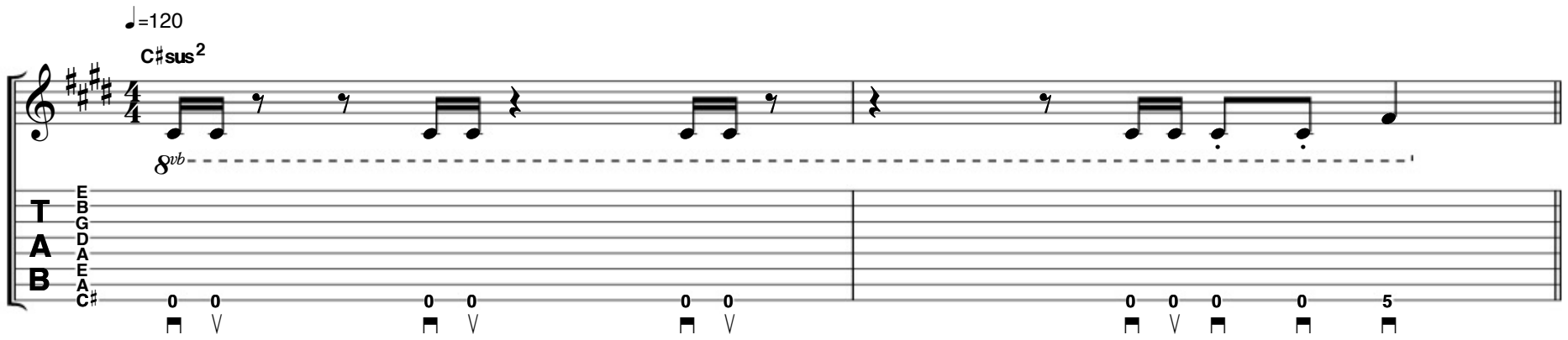
Physical Education, from the trio's less metallic and more fusion-led third album *The Joy Of Motion*, helped establish them as a more musically diverse and progressive-sounding band, with some jaw-dropping interplay between the two eight-string virtuosos and drummer Matt Garstka. It now stands as their highest-streaming and most heavily played song, by quite some distance, while also being far from their heaviest. To get the tones heard on the record, Tosin used his then-signature Ibanez TAM100 through a Fractal AxeFX II.

When *The Joy Of Motion* was released in 2014, Tosin explained how he was getting into more minimalist and vocal-inspired styles of phrasing using more bends. "This record is where I'm at as a player," he said. "I've been listening to a lot of Derek Trucks to learn about restraint. Because he plays slide, he can't do a sweep arpeggio – that style is usually limited to one note on one string. It may just be his intuition as a player, but to my ears he almost sounds like a gospel singer. There's something really impactful about it."

For certain sections of *Physical Education* and, indeed, many other famous Animals As Leaders cuts, he uses a technique he often refers to as 'thumping' – where he picks up and down in quick succession using his thumb – in tandem with his other fingers to create rhythm grooves and top lines that feel ethereal and otherworldly. "Why limit yourself to one stroke with your thumb when you can do double?" he once noted, while explaining how it's a bass technique that guitar players often find challenging to begin with. "If you've played any fingerstyle stuff on guitar you've already started using an open right hand," he reasoned, "but what feels counterintuitive is the upstroke with the thumb, which is the crux of the technique."

There are also a lot of ghost notes in riffs like the intro section, where Tosin allows his guitar to speak rhythmically instead of melodically, filling in the gaps to provide a sense of motion. It's a combination of these different techniques, as well as the finger-twisting riffs and classy jazz-rock leads, that helped turn Animals As Leaders into one of the most inspiring guitar bands of their generation.

DOUBLE-THUMB 'THUMPING' TECHNIQUE **BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO**



Tosin's double-thumb technique goes under the microscope here in this example tuned to the song's C♯-A-E-A-D-G-B-E tuning. If you don't own an eight-string you can still try our riff out – just tune your sixth string down three semitones to C♯ and play an octave higher than Tosin. Remember, the idea is to use your thumb to pick both down- and upstrokes. The ups feel unusual at first, so make sure to practise slowly.

Photo Getty

Metal's Rising Stars

Words Sam Roche

Three bands with huge potential – delivering frenetic alternate picking, uber-melodic chord runs, speaker-rattling feedback and the inevitable barrage of brutal riffs...

Photo Bayley Hanes

CHAT PILE

With the recent arrival of their debut album *God's Country*, Oklahoma City's Chat Pile seek to secure themselves a hefty lot of real estate in the space where sludge metal and noise rock collide. While the four-piece have released a selection of singles and EPs since their 2019 formation, *God's Country*, interwoven throughout with the "fatalism of daily life in the American Midwest", is their most visceral work yet, highlighting the group's stratospheric potential.

The band is composed of four anonymous members, who adopt mysterious pseudonyms to conceal their identities. They include vocalist Raygun Busch, guitarist Luther Manhole, bassist Stin and drummer Captain Ron. On the surface of Chat Pile's music shines Busch's desolate and often-blood-curdling vocals, which grip with a tangible sense of immediacy and grit. But underneath lies an ever-present bedrock of dirty distorted guitars laid down by Manhole. His style exacerbates the angst which permeates the music, tapping into dissonant chord structures, endlessly overdriven riffs, speaker-rattling feedback and even space-y cleans.

The band's bleak approach to existentialism has yielded them a considerable following in just a few short years, their doomy synthesis of noise rock and sludge with both industrial and nu-metal influences already resonating with thousands of fans.

But despite the desolate feeling ignited by their music, Chat Pile possess the ambition of a rising band making waves in the scene. In addition to the release of *God's Country*, they've enjoyed a recent string of live shows, and have even composed the score for an upcoming indie film, *Tenkiller*.

HERIOT

While a relatively young band in terms of time since formation, British metal outfit Heriot boast an impressively mature sound. Uncompromisingly heavy, their debut EP *Profound Mortality* packs in eight tracks of unbridled chaos, driven chiefly by the one-of-a-kind vocal partnership of Jake Packer and Debbie Gough, but also by the stellar electric guitar work of guitarists Gough and Erhan Alman.

Utilising elements of sludge, hardcore and modern metalcore, Gough and Alman drop tune their guitars and lay waste to Profound Mortality with a barrage of brutal riffs, which help bolster the already savage vocals of frontman and bassist Jake Packer.

But there are moments of respite tastefully placed throughout the EP's 20-minute duration, in which the pair shackle their six-strings to let electronically influenced soundscapes rise to the surface. Such instances can be heard on *Coalescence*, *Mutagen* and *Abattoir*, the latter being a two-and-a-half-minute instrumental with irregular electronic kick drum hits and enveloping sound design elements placed across the stereo field.

Indeed, Heriot's brief but hard-hitting catalogue positions them as inevitable frontrunners in the modern metalcore scene, and their ability to bring complex arrangements to the stage – performing at hallowed British metal festivals Download and Bloodstock, as well as Cheltenham's 2000trees in 2022 – only strengthens the prospect of their impending success.

The band's next steps are shrouded in mystery, but we'd bet our money on one thing: there's only one way from here for the British upstarts, and that's up.

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY FROM HERE FOR HERIOT, AND THAT'S UP

Photo Getty

MOODRING

Floridian four-piece Moodring are a hard band to define. Their music tiptoes the fences separating metal, alt-rock, and even synth-pop. Regardless, their proprietary amalgam of sound has thrust the trio into relevance, their debut EP *Showmetherealyou* garnering them enough of a following to land a record deal with Aussie metal label UNFD.

Being hard to characterise is a central tenet of Moodring's musical philosophy. "I grew up on the alternative bands of the 1990s," says frontman Hunter Young. "No matter what new interests might come and go, I am forever drawn back to the classic albums of that era; they feel larger than life, not bound to a fad or trend – timeless. That's what we aspire to with our band, to create songs that can transcend any scene."

And the band's debut full-length, *Stargazer* – which arrived in June – is expectedly difficult to pigeonhole. From its ethereally cinematic opener *How To Leave Painlessly* to the hooky choruses of *Constrict*, to the heavier metal-esque riffing of *SYNC.wav*, *Stargazer* is full of surprises, and highlights guitarist Sean Dolich's versatile approach to crafting parts for the electric guitar.

In stark juxtaposition with the chuggy drop-tuned antics of *SYNC.wav* and *Red Light Gossip*, the likes of *Novocaine Bones* finds Dolich offering spacier leads amid a lighter alt-rock arrangement, while *Peel* is packed with uber-melodic chord runs.

In their quest to expand their following, Moodring have toured extensively this year, performing at multiple dates over the summer in the US, no doubt gaining a multitude of new fans in the process.

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Guns N' Roses' debut album *Appetite For Destruction* was released in which year?

A) 1967
B) 1977
C) 1987
D) 1997

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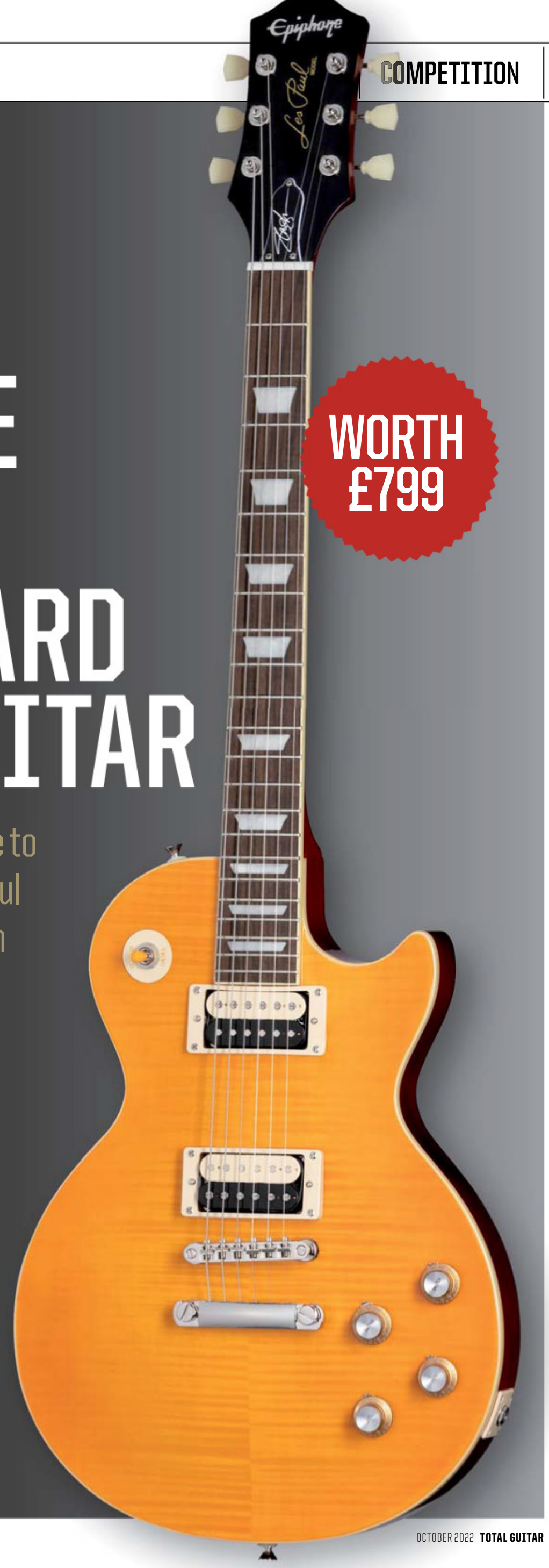


BLACK SABBATH

PARANOID

This ‘filler’ song recorded at the last minute for Sabbath’s second album became one of metal’s most iconic tracks. TG breaks it down...

Photo Getty Guitars and backing Simon Young

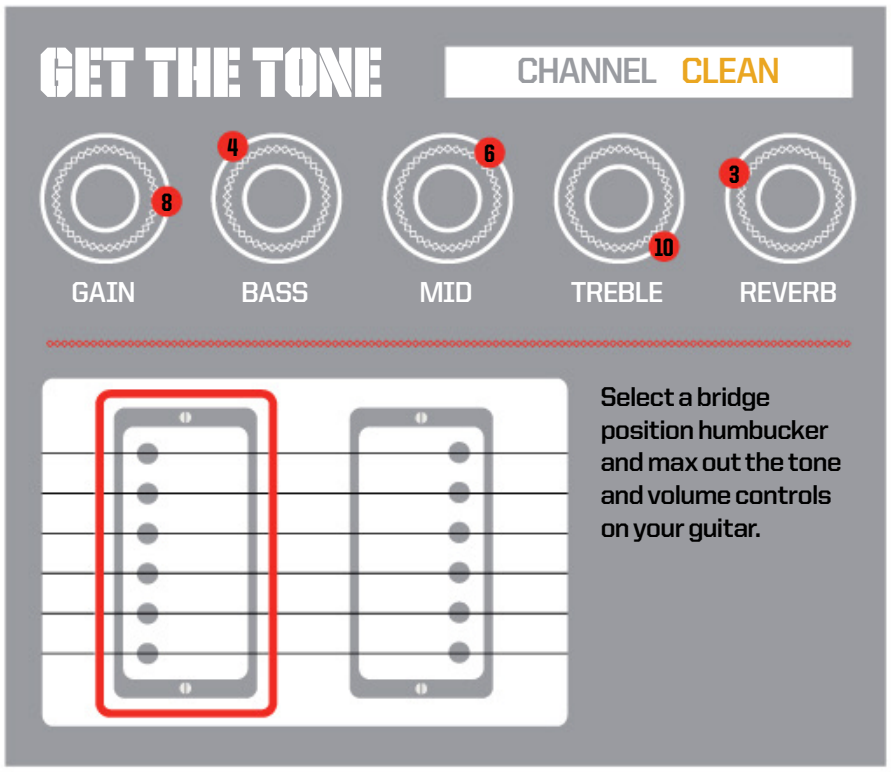
SOUND ADVICE

Everything you need to know before playing 'Paranoid'

Talk about fortuitous! This song, originally called 'The Paranoid', only exists because Black Sabbath needed to fill a three-minute gap on their second album.

"We went to the pub, and left Tony [Iommi, guitarist] in the studio trying to come up with a suitable riff," says studio engineer Tom Allom. "Later he came running over the road and told us, 'I've got it, I've got it.'"

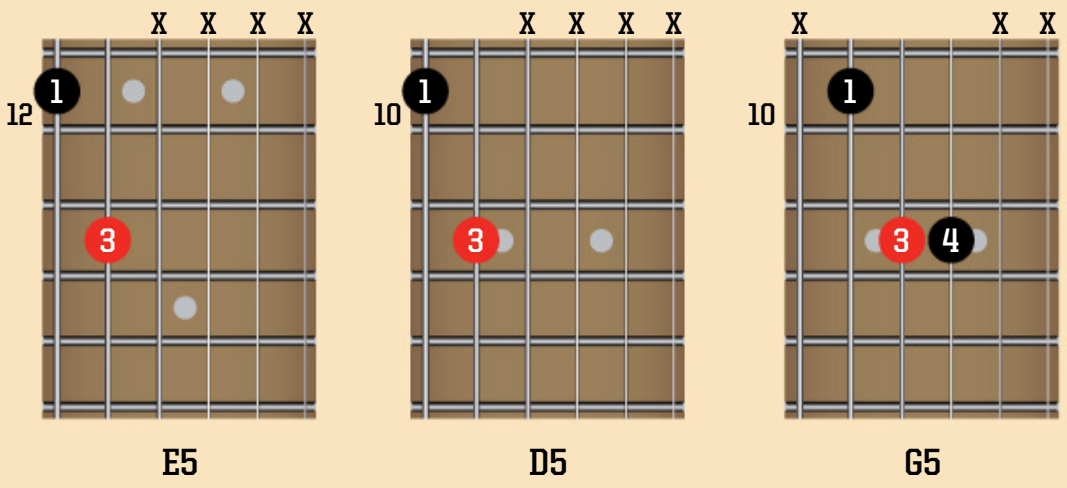
As it turned out, Iommi's excitement was somewhat justified. *Paranoid* is probably the band's best-known song, a track that paved the way in-part for the entire heavy metal genre. At its core are a handful of simple but iconic guitar riffs, all fairly easy to play, so make sure to focus on getting them just right as you follow our tab.

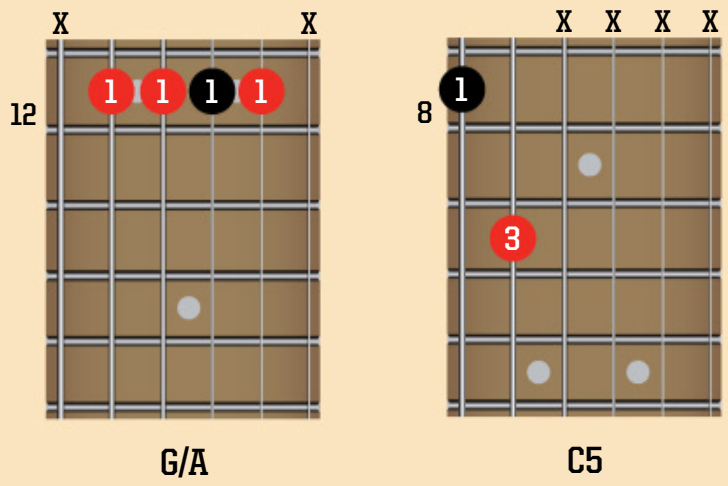


Iommi is a renowned Gibson SG devotee, and his early setup also consisted of a Laney stack and a Dallas Rangemaster Treble Booster (used to wring extra distortion out of his amps). For an authentic sound, you need a guitar equipped with a humbucker in the bridge position. Set the treble on your amp high to recreate the effect of Tony's treble booster. Depending on how much output your amp has, you'll either need a high-gain tone on an overdrive channel or a lower gain setting on a full-blown distortion channel. Tony's solo features a regular fuzz distortion tone in the left channel but there's a ring modulator effect in the right channel. If you have one of these, experiment with a low frequency level and keep the ring modulated sound a little lower than the main lead tone.

CHORDS

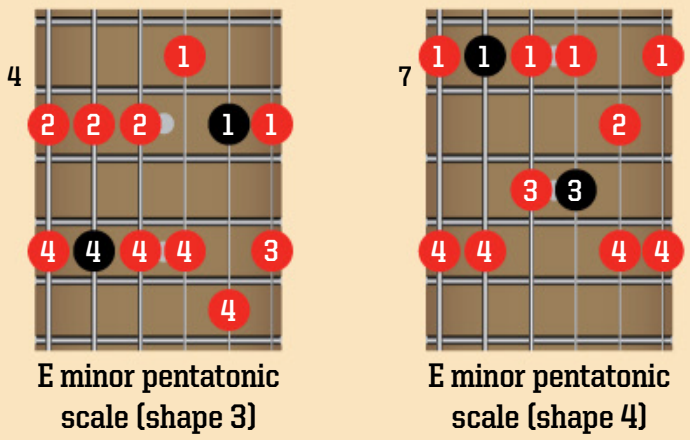
The main chords are E5, G5, C5 and D5 powerchords. Notice that Iommi plays the G5 over three strings but all the others on just two strings. Play the G/A chord with your first finger barring across the relevant strings at the 12th fret.

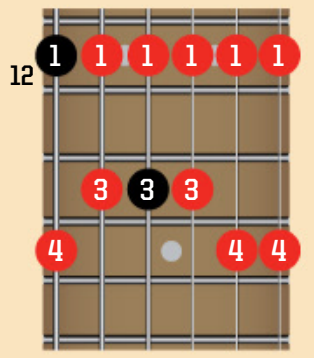




SCALES

These are all different ways of playing the E minor pentatonic scale, just at different points on the fretboard. Basically, you're recycling the same group of notes (E, G, A, B and D) as you move up the neck – just as Tony does to great effect in the solo. Practise these shapes before you tackle the solo; it helps you prepare your fingers for the movements and position shifts, as well as understand Tony's note choices.





BLACK SABBATH
PARANOID

FULL TAB

PARANOID
Words & Music by Terence Butler, Anthony Iommi, John Osbourne, William Ward
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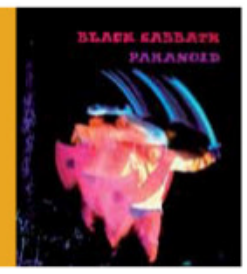
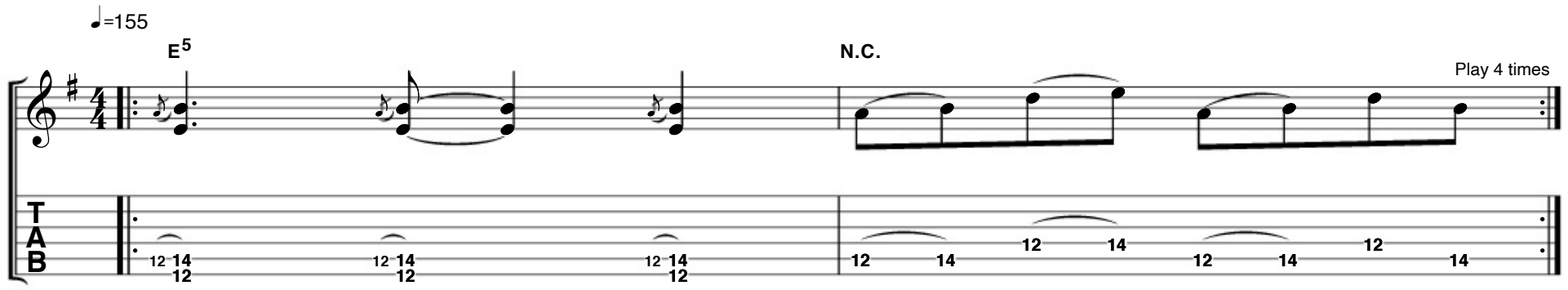


BLACK SABBATH PARANOID Intro

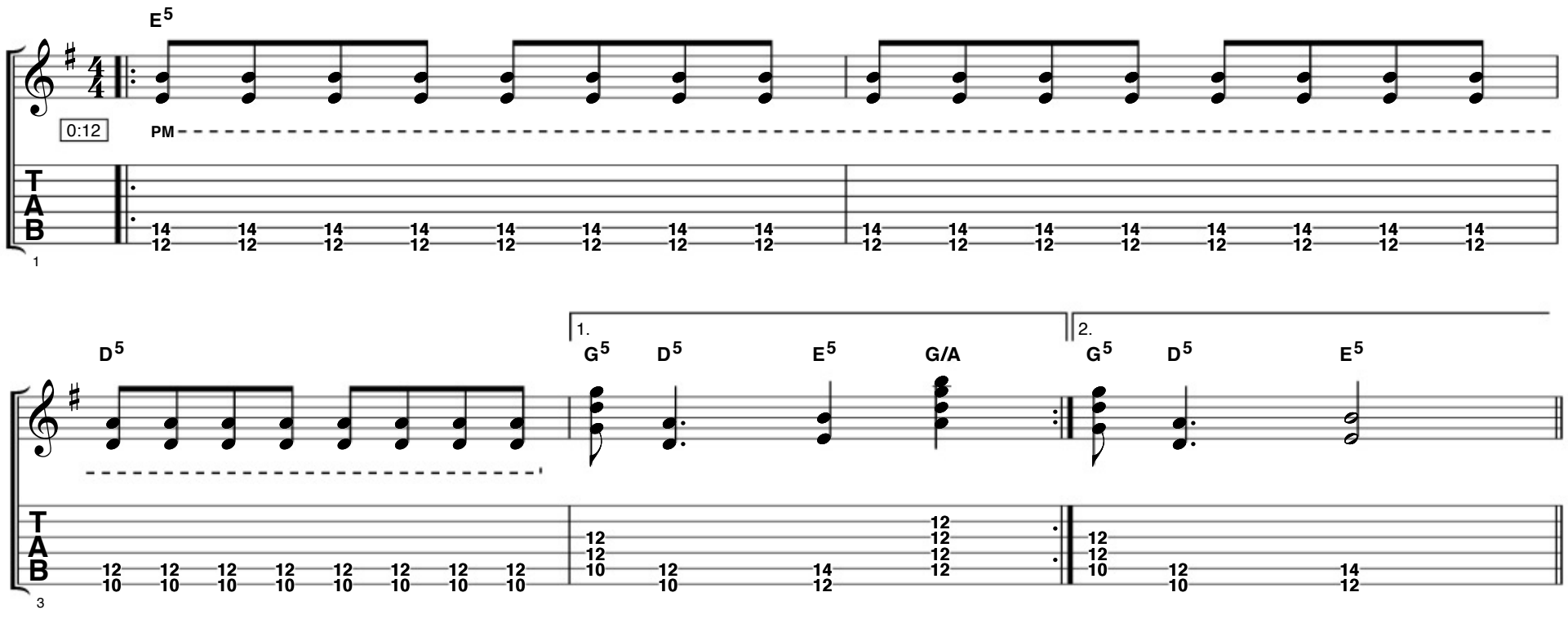
BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO



To play the hammer-on in bar 1, you need to barre across the fifth and sixth strings at the 12th fret with your first finger. Strike both strings with your pick and immediately hammer your third finger onto the fifth string. Your fingers will be in perfect position to play the notes in bar 2.

BLACK SABBATH PARANOID Verse

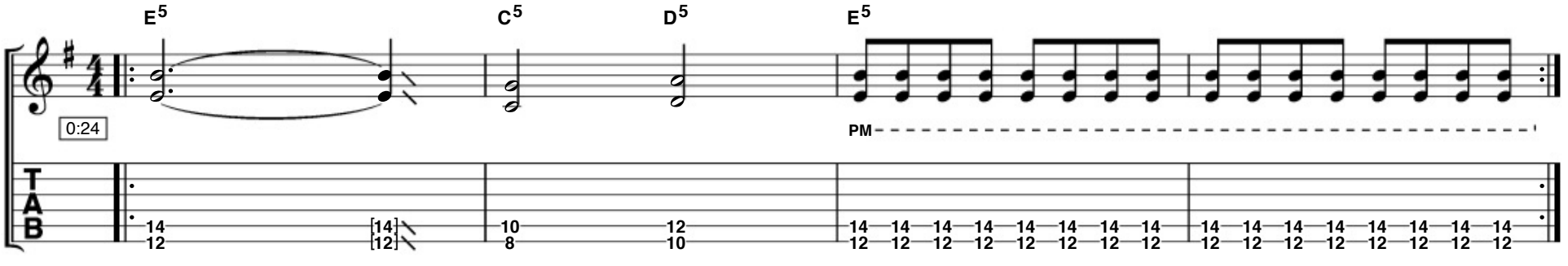
BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO



The chord at the end of bar 4 is a 12th-fret barre played with your first finger. Don't be too fussy about which strings you pick, just make sure you avoid fretting/striking the sixth string, because this makes the chord sound muddy. Strike the strings firmly for a sound that cuts through the mix.

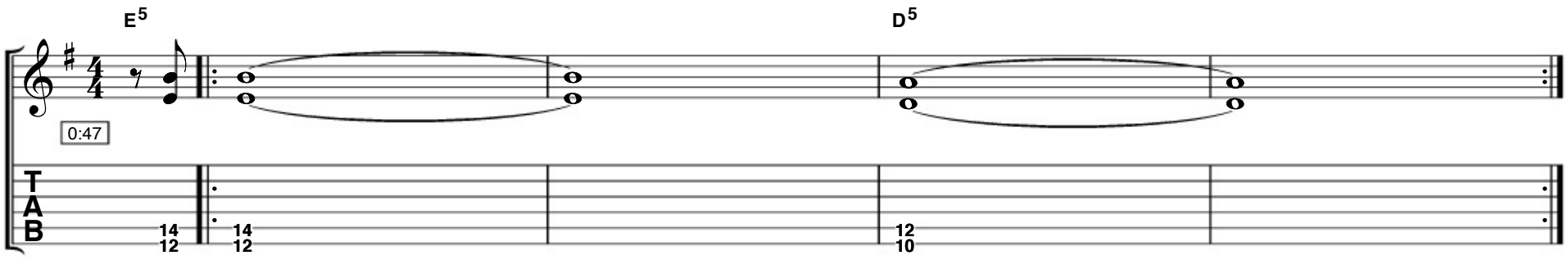
BLACK SABBATH PARANOID Interlude

BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO



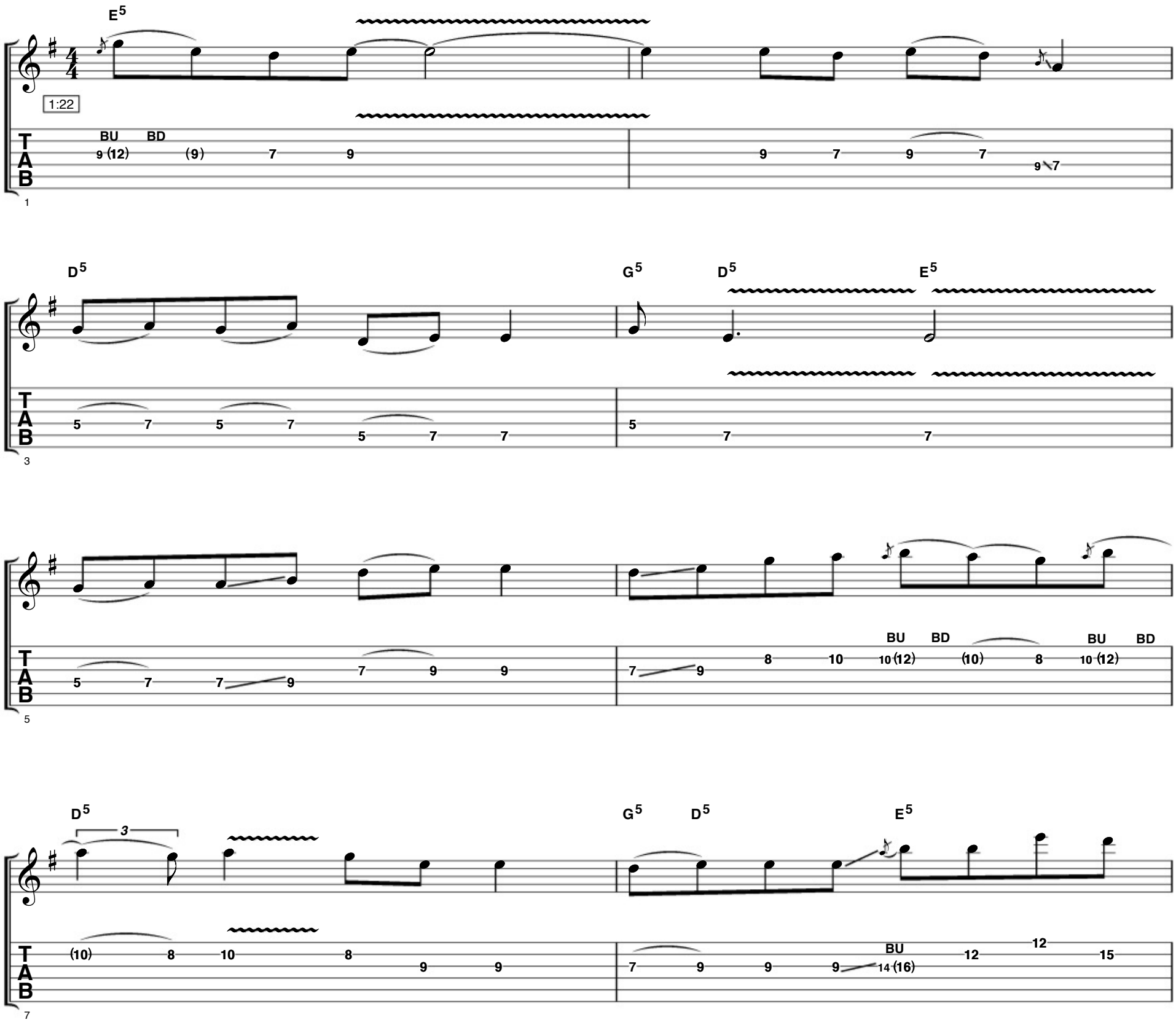
The E5 chord in bar 1 should sustain for the whole bar. Just slide the shape down the fretboard to the 8th fret without releasing the pressure off your fretting hand at the end of beat 4. Use an all-downstrokes approach for the powerchords in bars 3 and 4.

BLACK SABBATH PARANOID Bridge **BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO**



A powerchord played on the final eighth note of the previous bar precedes this bridge. The chord announces the start of the section but isn't played on the repeat. On the original recording, Iommi doubled up these two-note shapes with barre chords (E and D, both major) played on the four lowest-pitched strings to thicken the sound.

BLACK SABBATH PARANOID Solo **BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO**



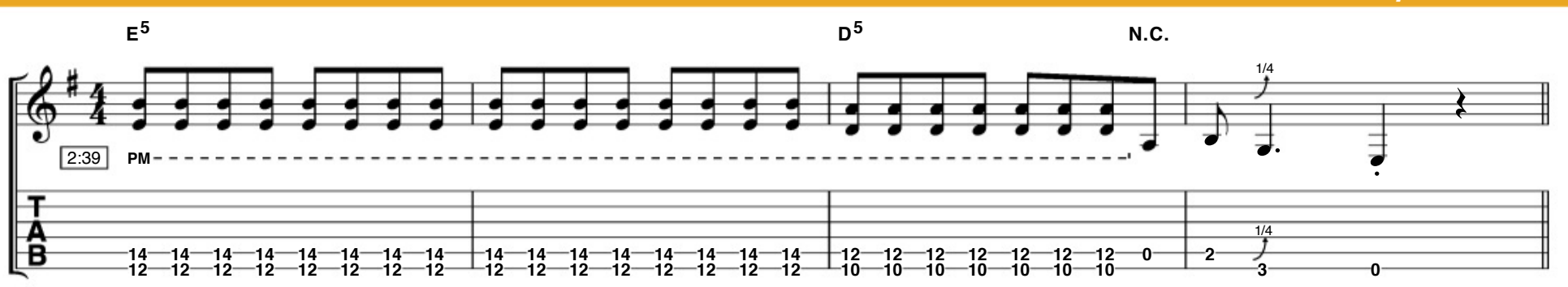
BLACK SABBATH PARANOID Solo (cont'd)

BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO

The solo opens with a three-semitone bend on the third string. Use your first, second and third fingers to bend the string up. Your third finger should be behind the fret, with your other fingers closely bunched together for maximum strength. Check the pitch you're aiming for by playing the target note on the 12th fret.

BLACK SABBATH PARANOID Outro

BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO



The open fifth string A note at the end of bar 3 gives you time to move your hand to the 2nd-fret position for the closing notes. The final note is played staccato (short and detached). To stop the note ringing, lightly touch the sixth string with the second finger of your fretting hand.

REAL PLUGIN

LA-STUDIO

REAL TUBE HEAD | Two notes AUDIO ENGINEERING | SUPERGROUP DESIGN

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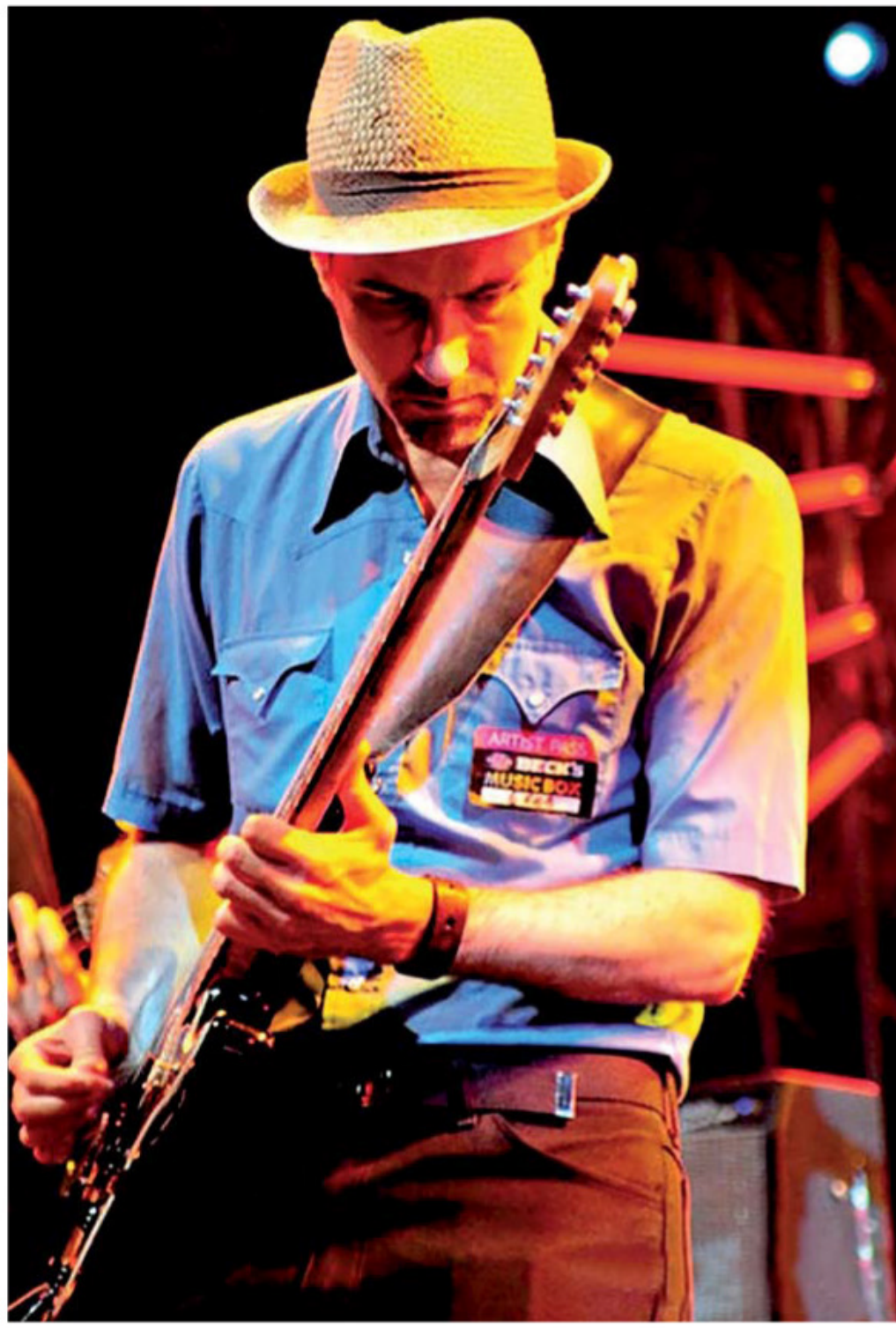
BREAKESTRA
CRAMP YOUR STYLE

Get your groove on with this classic cover by the LA-based 10-piece funk orchestra



Cramp Your Style is Breakestra's cover of All The People's 1972 funk classic, featuring an iconic horn section riff which has been arranged for guitar here in Rockschool's Grade Six version. To play the opening riff, strike the string with your picking hand, play the C# with your second finger and pull off to C natural on your first finger before hammering back on, without re-picking the string. This 'legato' technique emulates the sound of the horns playing a series of notes in one joined up phrase. You can repeat the technique in bar 2, bringing in your third and fourth fingers for the additional notes in this bar.

The arrangement combines single-note riffs with light, funky 16th-note chordal strums, and you'll need good picking control to master these changes. Funk requires a balance of rhythmic precision with a slightly 'loose' feel, creating an incredible groove. See if you can recreate the vibe!

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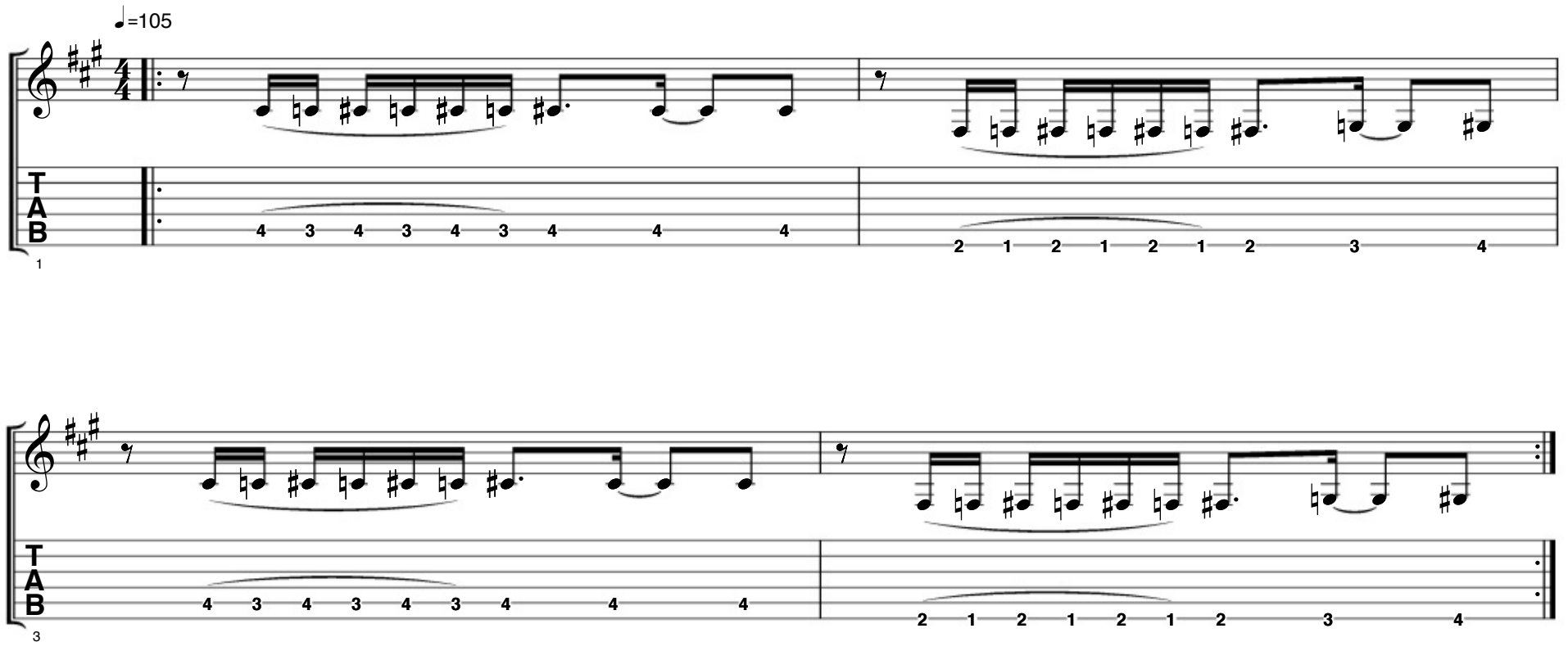
BREAKESTRA CRAMP YOUR STYLE **BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO**



Words Jono Harrison

BREAKESTRA CRAMP YOUR STYLE **BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO**

BREAKESTRA CRAMP YOUR STYLE **BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO**

The funky dominant 7th chords in bars 5, 6, 19, 20, 31 and 32 use close 'voice leading' on each change. That means there's noticeable melodic movement in the progression. You'll need to be secure with your fret-hand fingering to execute these changes smoothly, being sure to only strike the three strings needed each time.

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ESP SNAPPER 7 Citron Green
LTD SN-1000HT Fire Blast
LTD SN-1000FR Snow White
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OPEN-MIC SONGBOOK

JOHN MAYER
I GUESS I JUST FEEL LIKE

Develop your string bends and take your playing to a whole new level with this month's soulful strum-along

American singer/songwriter/guitarist John Mayer's acoustic technique and tasteful electric playing have earned him a huge and loyal fan base. He's been an important and highly influential player in the new millennium, turning heads since his 2001 debut *Room For Squares*.

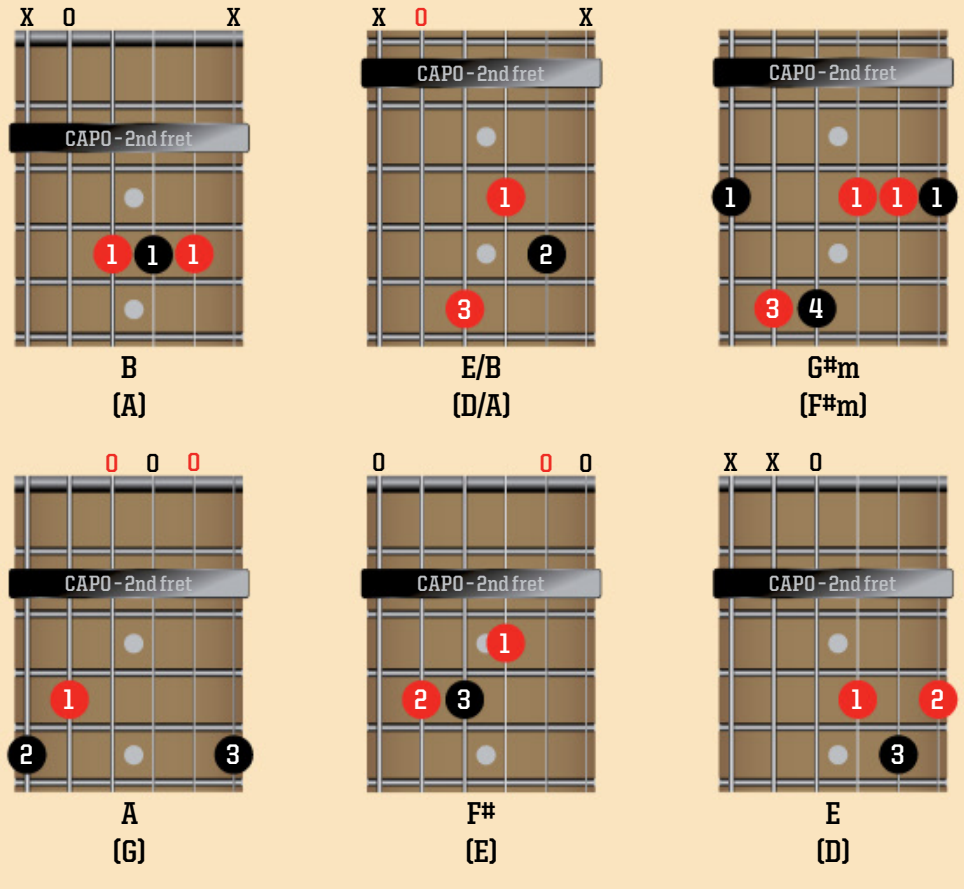
I Guess I Just Feel Like is a heartfelt, introspective ballad that features on 2021's *Sob Rock* album but was also previously released as a single in 2019.

The acoustic rhythm on this track is played with a capo on the 2nd fret, enabling that classic open A to D/A riff to be transposed to B major. Grab yourself a capo if you want to strum along, or if you prefer to focus on the electric parts then no capo is required.

We've tabbed the capo-less guitar solo note for note, and we recommend focusing on the position shifts. You'll be moving between the 4th and 14th frets after all, so it's vital to look ahead to where you're about to move to and choose a suitable finger to make the change as easy as possible.

CHORDS

Hold down the three-string barre with your first finger for the opening B chord. Your second and third fingers are then hammered on to form E/B. Use a loose strumming motion throughout, but home in on the notes on the second string with a bit more accuracy when playing the changes between B and E/B.



I GUESS I JUST FEEL LIKE
Words and Music by John Mayer
© Milky Boy Music (GMR)

Guitars and backing Phil Capone Photo Getty

BACKING TRACK (BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO)
This song comes with a full backing track. Enter the above link into your web browser of choice; press play and jam along, guitaraoke style!

SONGSHEET

I Guess I Just Feel Like

Intro
B / / / E/B / / / x2

Verse 1
B E/B
I guess I just feel like
B E/B
I guess I just feel like
G♯m
Nobody's honest
E/B
Nobody's true
G♯m
Everyone's lying
E/B
To make it on through
B E/B
I guess I just feel like
B E/B
I'm the same way too

Interlude
B / / / E/B / / / x2

Verse 2
B E/B
I guess I just feel like
B E/B
Good things are gone
B E/B
And the weight of my worries
B E/B
Is too much to take on
G♯m
I think I remember
E/B
This dream that I had
G♯m
That love's gonna save us
E/B
From a world that's gone mad
B E/B
I guess I just feel like
B E/B
What happened to that?

Solo
A / / / / / / / G♯m / / / / / / /
A / / / / / / / G♯m / / / F♯ / / /

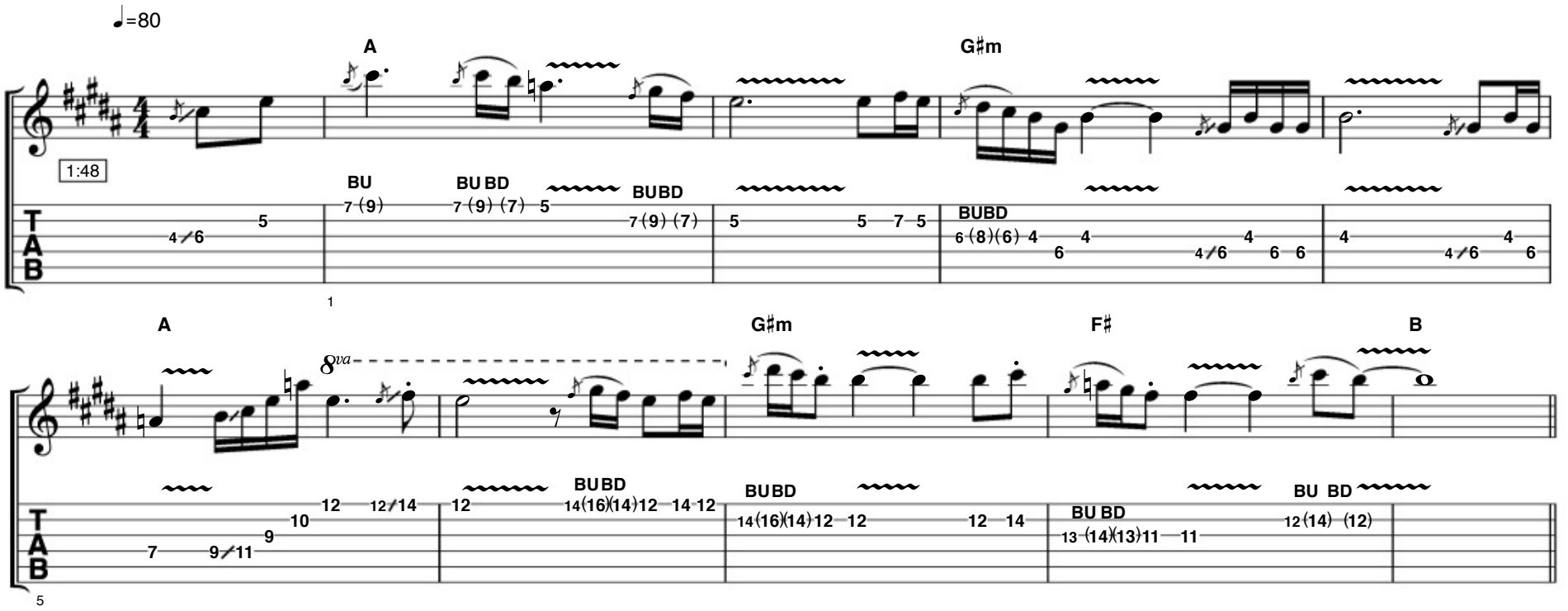
Repeat interlude

Verse 3
B E/B
I guess I just feel like
B E/B
The joke's gettin' old
B E/B
The future is fading
B E/B
And the past is on hold
G♯m
But I know that I'm open
E/B
And I know that I'm free
G♯m
And I'll always let hope in
E/B
Wherever I'll be
G♯m
And if I go blind
E/B
I'd still find my way
B E/B
I guess I just felt like
B E/B
Giving up today

Outro
B / / A E / / /

(repeat to fade)

JOHN MAYER I GUESS I JUST FEEL LIKE Solo **BIT.LY/TG363AUDIO**



Watch out for the timing of your string bends here. Most start as grace notes (i.e., with no real time value as such) but are released rhythmically (i.e., following stricter timing, either as 16th or eighth notes). Also make sure to look ahead to check where you're about to move to – there are several position shifts here.

THE GAS STATION

REAL WORLD REVIEWS OF THE BEST NEW GEAR

Welcome to the GAS (Gear Acquisition Syndrome*) Station! Every issue, TG scours the market for the hottest new gear and brings you transparent reviews that you can trust. From the smallest of accessories that make your life easier, to big investments, such as brand new guitars, amps and effects pedals – if it's worth your attention, you'll find it here!

HOW WE TEST

CURATION
Our product selection is driven by our love of gear. We select the most exciting products on the market every month to bring you opinions you can trust.

FACE-VALUE REVIEWS
We're not gear snobs here at *Total Guitar*. We judge it on whether it looks good, sounds good and plays well – not by the name on the headstock.

*WHAT IS GAS?
Gear Acquisition Syndrome is the guitar-player's never-ending urge to acquire new gear, irrespective of whether they actually need it. Don't pretend you don't have it – we all do!

NO SNAKE OIL
You won't find us getting hung up on hokey mythology or nonsense marketing speak: we aim to bring you bullsh*t-free opinions on the gear you're interested in.

WE CAN'T BE BOUGHT
TG review scores are a true reflection of our experts' opinion on the product they've been testing. You'll never find a rating in our mag that has been bought and paid for.

REAL WORLD REVIEWS
We test every product under the conditions that they were designed for. For example, if an amp is designed to be played loud, rest assured that we'll have tested it at rehearsal/gig volumes!

BEST BUY AWARD
TG Best Buy Awards are reserved for stand-out products that earn a 4.5 star overall rating. This is the most exciting new gear that you *need* to check out

Total Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

PLATINUM AWARD
Reserved for the very best of the best, TG's Platinum Awards are given to class-leading, gamechanging products that score a maximum 5 stars in every category.

Total Guitar PLATINUM AWARD

SUPERB, A BEST BUY | EXCELLENT | ABOVE AVERAGE KIT | SOME ISSUES | POOR

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The nylon string electro goes centre stage!

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Love is the Lore?

START ME UP!

Five awesome new products to get your gear engine revving this month...

BARE KNUCKLE UNITY HUMBUCKERS

1 Following a special limited run in April to raise money for humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, BKP have now made the Unity pickups part of its standard line. And the best news of all is profits will go to the Disasters Emergency Committee. The hot rock/metal humbuckers are also released alongside a new finish option; wood-effect etched open coil bobbins in a wide range of colours, as well as natural finishes.

From £157.20
www.bareknuckle pickups.co.uk

WALRUS AUDIO MIRA OPTICAL COMPRESSOR

2 Compressor pedals might be the most overlooked effect out there and Walrus is helping to address that here with a studio-style unit offering everything from an always-on enhancement to funky squish, with added depth. Alongside Threshold, Attack, Release, Ratio and Makeup gain, there's the potentials of parallel wet and dry compression to explore from the Blend control that will be a tweaker's delight. A switchable high pass filter can cut frequencies below 120Hz.

£249
www.walrusaudio.com

WAMPLER MOXIE

3 Another month, another Tube Screamer-style pedal. But based on what Brian Wampler did with his take on the Klon (Tumnus) and Blues Driver (Pantheon), we're all ears for the Moxie. Honing on the TS-10 blueprint, this mini green machine offers two switches for added versatility; Voice and Fat. The former adds clarity by changing the EQ for a more transparent tone, while Fat brings Wampler's custom MOSFET clipping for high-end boutique amp thrills.

£149
www.wamplerpedals.com

ERNIE BALL TRIPLE PACKS

4 If you realise you need to change your guitar strings but don't have any, you need one of Ernie Ball's triple packs of three strings sets. The range has expanded dramatically to mark the company's 60th anniversary and now includes the Turbo and Primo half gauge Slinky as part of nine nickel sets options alongside Rock N' Roll Slinky and acoustic Earthbound and Ernesto Palla nylon strings.

£ Various
www.ernieball.com

BOSS DUAL CUBE LX

5 Boss expands the iconic Cube series of portable amps with new guitar and bass models. Alongside the option of battery power (eight AA batteries) that has proved a win with buskers, these 10-watt combo amps offer Stereo In connection to take advantage of your reverbs and delay pedals with their stereo speakers. Each offer a range of amp and Boss effects models, but tailored for guitar or bass according to the model.

£249 (guitar) and £299 (bass)
www.boss.info

EPIPHONE NOEL GALLAGHER RIVIERA

£789

She's electric! Noel's signature invokes 90s nostalgia with a familiar face

Cast your mind back to 1996 and the height of Britpop, and there's every chance this guitar will ring a vivid bell. Oasis had released their second album, *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?*, 'Cool Britannia' was in full swing, and Noel Gallagher was busy reigniting the nation's passion with playing a six-string. His Wine Red Epiphone Riviera played a huge part in this.

Not only was it featured in the *Don't Look Back In Anger* video, but it made an appearance in the promo for *Champagne Supernova* too, alongside loads of live performances. While Noel had plenty of nice guitars by this point, it's for the reasons above that the Epiphone stood out to so many, and, crucially, fans could go and buy an Epiphone at affordable prices without having to 'compromise' with the affordable version of a Gibson to get the same guitar as their hero. It *was* an Epiphone that Noel was using.

> "MORE THAN ANYTHING, THIS GUITAR INSPIRED US TO PLAY IT"

All of this, of course, is our booze-tinted-goggles build-up to the fact that Epiphone has finally released an affordable Noel Gallagher guitar. Yes, there was the Supernova, but that wasn't an 'organic' model in Gallagher's guitar rack in the way the early-80s Riviera was, and it's also long-discontinued.

But it presents a conundrum – why would you buy this guitar, priced at around £150 more 'on the street' than Epiphone's stock production Riviera? That's what we're here to find out. But first, a bit of history.

The Riviera shares a lot of its features with Gibson's ES-335. Noel's guitar was a Japanese-made catalogue Epiphone from the early 80s, and at the time, the guitar was offered in two finishes: Antique Sunburst or Wine Red. It also came with humbuckers as standard, and was fitted with Epiphone's Frequensator tailpiece – which kept the total length of the bass strings longer, while shortening the treble strings. The idea being that the fundamental frequencies of each would be accented.

Now, a quick comparison between the current Riviera and the Noel Gallagher signature model will show you two key differences. First are the pickups – the stock version is fitted with traditional mini-humbuckers. Second is that tailpiece we just mentioned, Noel's guitar swaps the Frequensator for an Epiphone LockTone stopbar. We get the full-size humbuckers, the correct finish, the parallelogram fretboard markers (orientated to the left, as with Noel's original), even the 'crown' headstock inlay. So spec-wise, it's based on the correct era of Riviera to match Noel's, and basically saves you some messing about with swapping hardware and pickups. Not bad at all for £150.

Enough comparison, then, and time to delve into the Riviera we have to hand. It starts with a five-ply, laminated maple body, and there's a maple

1 HUMBUCKERS
Unlike the regular Riviera in Epiphone's catalogue, Noel's signature is fitted with a pair of standard sized 'buckers: Epiphone Alnico PROs for authentic Oasis-era tones.

2 BRIDGE
The standard Riviera comes with a Frequensator tailpiece. Here, the strings are terminated by a LockTone stoptail, bringing it in line with Noel's original and making it even more ES-335-like.

3 FINISH
It comes in Dark Wine Red, matched closely to Noel's own Epiphone. The inlays add a cool visual touch too, but aside from this, the only indication that it's a signature model is the understated squiggle on the back of the headstock.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Maple, laminate with centre block

NECK: Maple

FINGERBOARD: Indian laurel

FRETS: 22

PICKUPS: Epiphone Alnico Classic PRO

CONTROLS: 2x volume, 2x tone, 3-way switch

HARDWARE: Nickel

LEFT-HANDED: No

FINISH: Dark Wine Red

CASE: Yes

CONTACT: Epiphone, www.epiphone.com

Photography Phil Barker

Some Might Save

A Noel Gallagher alternative for those with deeper pockets

Noel's Riviera isn't the only signature model that's been on his mind lately. Gibson launched a Custom Shop, Murphy Lab version of Gallagher's coveted ES-335 alongside the Riviera. As you might expect, it's replicated in meticulous detail including the heavily-aged finish, Custombucker pickups and Varitone control. It comes with case candy, in the form of a reproduction of Noel's lyric sheet, a hand-signed certificate and a custom Bear strap identical to Noel's. But, with only 200 being made and a pricetag of over £9K, we can see the Riviera being popular.

centre-block running through the middle to help tame feedback. The neck is also made of maple, featuring a SlimTaper profile and volute, while the Indian Laurel fingerboard is a familiar 24.75-inch scale length with 22 frets. As mentioned, it's a dual-humbucker configuration, in this case a pair of Alnico Classic PROs in both positions and continuing the theme of familiarity, they're wired to a three-way switch and individual tone and volume controls for each pickup. In essence, everything is as we'd expect.

The first thing that hits us on removing the guitar from the included Epiphone hard case, is just how understated the signature element is. If you know, you'll know; if not, it's only the signature to the rear of the headstock that denotes this as Noel's replica. Outside of this, it's a really nice-looking Epiphone in a cool finish that's otherwise unavailable.

The SlimTaper neck is one of the biggest surprises – it's thin, but doesn't feel too modern, particularly given that if we're going for Noel's playing style, there's a strong mix of open and barre chords required as well as the lead playing. This sets a decent middle ground for both, and makes the open-string voicings nice and easy.

Tone-wise, it's all very much as you might expect too. The neck sounds are big, full and round, and begging for some crunchy overdrive. The reward is classic indie rhythm sounds, and an addictive bluesy lead tone. We did find ourselves parked on the neck pickup for longer than normal, but if that fat darkness is a bit too much for you, the middle and bridge positions will offer additional spike and sparkle.

Ultimately, this guitar fulfils its purpose, and is more evidence that a semi-acoustic isn't simply for vintage rock 'n' roll or blues (although it obviously excels at this, too). Open it up a bit and you'll get meaty rock rhythm and lead tones, but more than anything, this guitar inspired us to want to play it. It could be suggestion, it could be fandom, but it feels like its got ideas in it and all you've got to do is find them. Noel used a similar-level instrument to cement himself in history, and the potential is inspiring.

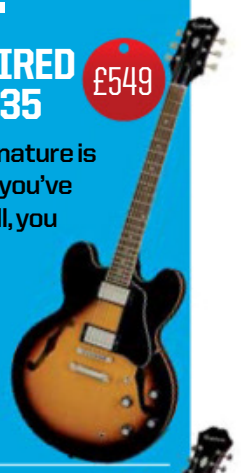
Stuart Williams

> "THE NOEL GALLAGHER RIVIERA'S POTENTIAL IS INSPIRING..."

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★
PLAYABILITY	★★★★★
OVERALL RATING	★★★★★

ALSO TRY...

EPIPHONE INSPIRED BY GIBSON ES-335 £549



Noel's other recent signature is a Gibson ES-335, but if you've run out of organs to sell, you could try this instead. It has the same body construction, pickups and hardware as the NG Riviera, and comes in a Cherry Red model.

EPIPHONE RIVIERA £649

It's a more traditional take on the same guitar with its mini-humbuckers and Frequensator tailpiece, but if you'd like a Riviera without the signature appointments then this is it. Available in Burgundy if you wish.

GRETSCH G2622 STREAMLINER £509

A big-body semi-acoustic on a budget, Here we've got the fundamental ingredients: centre-blocked, laminate maple body, dual humbuckers and a thin U-shaped neck.

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GRETSCH
ELECTROMATIC

Words Jonathan Horsley Photography Phil Barker

GRETSCH G5220 ELECTROMATIC JET BT & G5260 ELECTROMATIC JET BARITONE

The venerable Gretsch single-cut gets updated for the modern era as two classy Jets are served up two different ways

Today were are going to take a look at two variations on an iconic single-cut electric guitar. No, not *that* one – the Gretsch Jet, a model that has been in production in one way or another since 1953 with the arrival of the Duo Jet. The Jet has put some miles under its belt over the years, finding its way into the possession of an array of players, including George Harrison, Matt Bellamy, Chris Cornell and many more, and like an old-fashioned blues standard that's been passed down generations there are all kinds of variations on the theme. You'll find them with hard-tails or Bigsby vibratos, with pickups ranging from the DynaSonic snap and definition of the G6128T-GH George Harrison Signature Duo Jet to the PAF-power of a Broad'Tron humbucker.

The G5220 and baritone G5260 from Gretsch's mid-priced Electromatic range are Chinese made but conform to the classic Jet recipe, with chambered mahogany bodies as standard. They both look like they pre-date decimalisation but are new for 2022, and arrive with a host of updates bestowed upon all new Electromatics. They look the part, with bound headstocks and bodies, vintage-style purfling, Big Block pearloid inlays, sealed tuners and a number of finish options.

While they are clearly siblings, sharing the neat V-Stoptail hardware, not to mention the very welcoming Thin U neck profiles and Indian laurel fingerboards found across the series, they are both very different guitars. The G5260 has a bolt-on build, a longer 29.75" baritone scale to accommodate the lower tuning, and has mini-humbuckers, whereas the G5220 houses a pair of Broad'Tron humbuckers, with its newly upgraded body sporting a maple top.

All the classic guitar brands have their purists, yet none are as devout as the Gretsch super-fan. These electrics have a retro appeal, sure, but are not necessarily for those whose idea of Gretsch doesn't extend beyond twang, chime and the radio hits of the 1950s. Sure, you'll get a taste of that here but the G5220 and baritone G5260 grant today's player plenty of license to give 'That great Gretsch sound' a new cadence.

GRETSCH G5220 ELECTROMATIC JET BT £529

Prepare for takeoff

The G5220 is a typical Electromatic, which means a champagne instrument at craft beer prices. Of course, Gretsch's superlative entry-level Streamliner series is even easier on the wallet, but it's hard to compete with this on value. The Bristol Fog finish has a smoky vibe that is immaculately finished with the binding and purfling, and complemented by the chrome hardware and Gretsch-branded arrow control knobs.

If your first move on any new electric guitar is to play hit an open A chord as hard as you can, you'll be well rewarded with a sound that suggests that, just maybe, this is going to be a classic Gretsch experience after all, and by classic we mean a sound inextricably linked to the heritage of the brand. The Broad'Tron pickups are hum-cancelling, with an output similar to, say, a Gibson PAF, and they balance this power with definition. Gretsch calls it "full-spectrum fidelity" and we'd endorse that description. There's a forensic note definition that brings chords to life. Should your amp be on the threshold of overdrive when hitting the aforementioned A chord, the recorded works of Malcolm Young will spring to mind.

What this Jet reminds us is that heritage brands can be fun, fun, fun. The compact scale – particularly after playing the baritone – makes it a willing accomplice for all kinds of rock 'n' roll adventures. High-gain stuff is rough and unruly and exhilarating, while the Jet excels at power-pop mid-70s sounds, sprinkling magic dust on big chords. There is a resonant snap and bounce that does just enough to assuage the rock 'n' roll set. Through the right amp, a tube combo with spring reverb to taste, it'll scratch that itch for *American Graffiti* tones. It's not an all-rounder but what is? Besides, it is pretty close.

GRETSCH G5260 ELECTROMATIC JET BARITONE

£609

The low-end is nigh

That historic context makes even more sense when you starting playing the G5260. There is something pleasingly rubbery about that the tubby sound of that low B string. With a little slapback echo and spring reverb, and picking near the bridge, you can coax a twang out of it that does the name on the headstock proud.

The G5260 looks stretched out, its top flat where the G5220's is noticeably arched, and for a moment you might ask yourself if you need arms like Mr Tickle to cover the fingerboard. Perhaps the biggest trick the G5260 pulls is in shrinking once you start playing it, that it feels manageable.

In a sense, this G5260 splits the difference between the 60s vibe and the baritone's latter-day uses. The proprietary mini-humbuckers are not going to arm-wrestle an EMG into submission but they have a growl that invites incaution with the fuzz pedal. Always a good option. Played clean, it goes from being Morricone-adjacent on the bridge pickup to piano-esque and detailed at the neck. Baritone guitars might be most widely recognised as a specialist instrument but this challenges that.

Who is this for? How long have you got. You can play all kinds of styles on this. Modern metal and shred is a stretch; everything else is fair game. Woolly mammoth, fuzzed-out Melvins tones, grunge, punk, all translate well. Jazz chords are given a sonorous authority when performed on a baritone. Okay, blues sounds kinda weird but assimilated into the vocabulary of rock 'n' roll and big riffing classic rock the baritone makes sense. There is just enough power and oomph – not to mention clarity – to make it work. And like its standard-scale sibling, the G5260 is nicely put together, a guitar whose price tag might require a double take.

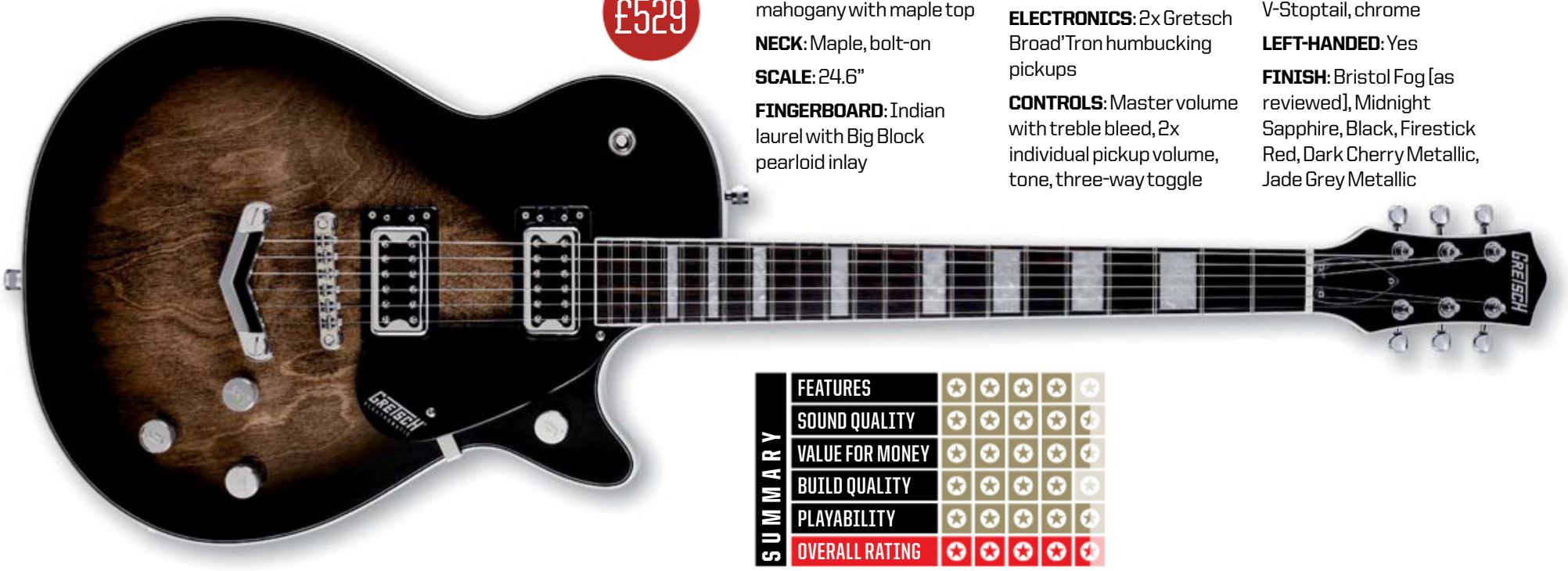
FINAL VERDICT

The question is: do you want your Jet at cruising altitude or turned down low?

In a sense, there is no like-for-like comparison to be made. The baritone, extended down a lower 4th to B (or A if you're feeling brave), is a floor-shaker that muscles in on the bass player's territory, while the G5220 is a contemporary update to septuagenarian platform, accessible, classy, a jack of most trades. And yet they both demonstrate how classic design can be augmented over time, and how Gretsch's brand identity translates to different platforms. Though the output jacks on both our instruments were a little loose, the quality of the fit and finish is otherwise tip-top, with tuning stable throughout, and factory setups that present both as addictively playable guitars. Even the baritone, with its tow-rope sixth string, is player-friendly. We often talk about Gretsch being typecast but this takes us through the looking glass with a guitar that challenges our assumptions of what a baritone is for. The G5220's versatility makes it a compelling option in a market comprising some superb mid-priced electrics from the likes of Epiphone and Fender's Player Plus series. Broad'Trons make for a more hench Gretsch sound but it is not overpowering. If anything, with these dynamic humbuckers, the Jet is more practical than ever.

GRETSCH G5220 ELECTROMATIC

£529



AT A GLANCE

BODY: Chambered mahogany with maple top

NECK: Maple, bolt-on

SCALE: 24.6"

FINGERBOARD: Indian laurel with Big Block pearloid inlay

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

ELECTRONICS: 2x Gretsch Broad'Tron humbucking pickups

CONTROLS: Master volume with treble bleed, 2x individual pickup volume, tone, three-way toggle

HARDWARE: Sealed tuners, V-Stoptail, chrome

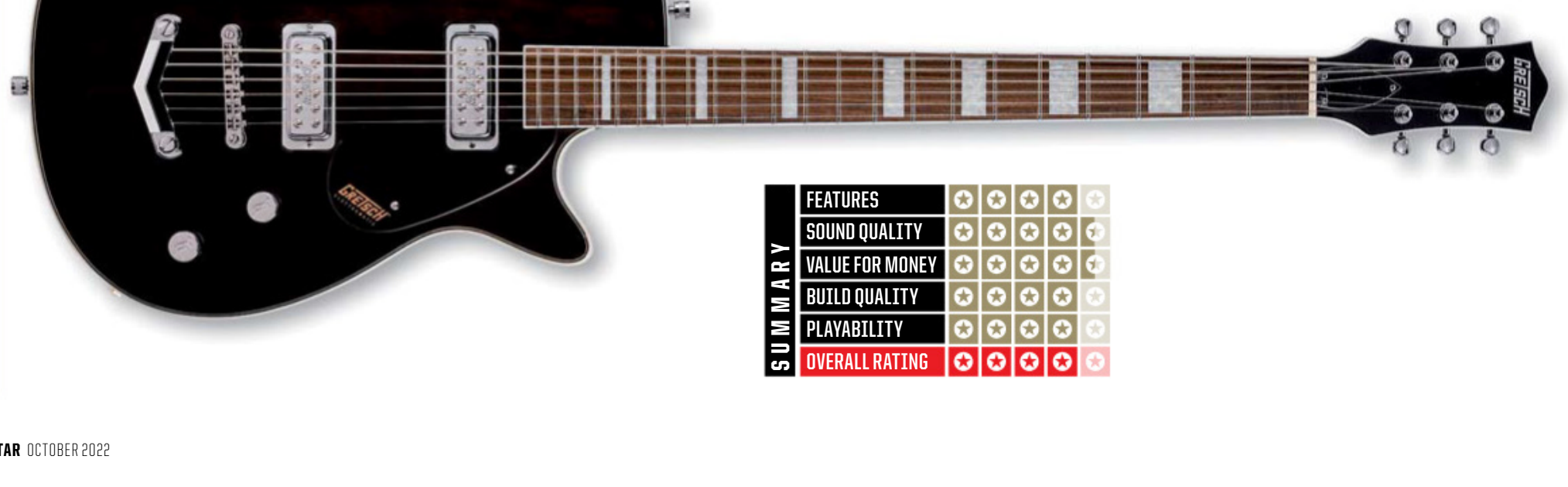
LEFT-HANDED: Yes

FINISH: Bristol Fog [as reviewed], Midnight Sapphire, Black, Firestick Red, Dark Cherry Metallic, Jade Grey Metallic

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★
PLAYABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

GRETSCH G5260 ELECTROMATIC

£609



AT A GLANCE

BODY: Chambered mahogany

NECK: Maple, bolt-on

SCALE: 29.75"

FINGERBOARD: Indian laurel with Big Block pearloid inlay

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

ELECTRONICS: 2x Gretsch mini-humbuckers

CONTROLS: Volume, tone, three-way toggle

HARDWARE: Sealed tuners, V-Stoptail, chrome

LEFT-HANDED: No

FINISH: Imperial Stain [as reviewed], London Grey Metallic, Bristol Fog, Jade Grey Metallic

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★
PLAYABILITY	★★★★
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

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CÓRDOBA STAGE £625

The nylon-string electro goes centre stage!

Córdoba are one of the biggest names in the nylon-string world and are no strangers to stage-aimed electro-acoustics, typically with thinner depth bodies and comprehensive pickup systems. But they're calling this new Chinese-made Stage electro their first 'electric' guitar which reflects not only its thin, sealed body but also its high-tech pickup system: a nylon-string that's a long way from its classical roots.

Crisply constructed with a chambered mahogany back and solid spruce top faced with a posh-looking flame maple veneer, it's only marginally wider than a Les Paul with a Fender-style depth of just over 40mm. It retains the classical-standard scale length of 650mm (25.59") but the neck is not only thinner in width than a typical classical but the fingerboard is lightly cambered, not flat, although typically we only get side, not face position markers. The neck also features, like many modern nylon-strings, a two-way adjustable truss rod. At just over 5lbs, it's weightier than a typical electro-acoustic too, but far from heavy. Another nod to its 'electric' status is the second strap button mounted on the top shoulder, and strapped on or seated it's balanced and comfortable.

So, the Stage not only feels electric-like but its top-mounted controls are very different from an electro's usual side-mounted preamp and much easier to adjust on the fly. Unplugged, thanks to those three small soundholes on the upper shoulder, there's enough acoustic volume for solo practice. But as its name suggests it's really designed to be plugged in and here the new pickup system, which combines both an under-saddle transducer and two body sensors, really delivers. It captures an accurate, almost mic'd Spanish sound that's crisp with a fast note attack; the Blend control allows you to mix in the body sensors to the under-saddle for a fuller voice that's ideal flamenco-style body taps, or the more contemporary percussion of Rodrigo y Gabriela. The middle EQ control is relatively subtle seeming to add a little crispness, a slight low-end boost and a dip in the midrange. It's an impressive sound into an AER acoustic amp or small PA that's very manageable in use and unbothered by feedback.

But it might well earn its stripes as a recording tool. Plugged into a simple DAW, you'd swear you were hearing a nicely mic'd acoustic with only a hint of piezo 'quack' that works effortlessly to give your tracks some Latin style.

It's hard to find fault here, not least at this price. Yes, the fret tops could do with a little more smoothing, but every other detail is near perfect. Unlike the pure classical guitar it feels much more steel-string-like, with a direct sound that challenges many more highly priced electros.

Dave Burrluck

> "A SOUND THAT CHALLENGES MORE HIGHLY PRICED ELECTROS"

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
PLAYABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

1 NECK Compared to a steel-string acoustic, classical guitars have a wide neck and flat fingerboard. The Stage's crossover style aims to sit midway so here the nut width is a comfortable 48mm – still wide but along with the 16" radius the fingerboard face and slim depth make for a very playable nylon-string.

2 PICKUPS The new pickup system here was co-designed by Córdoba and Fishman and is exclusive to this Stage model. Aside from its standard under-saddle transducer there are two small dot sensors which attach to the underside of the top just behind the bridge.

3 CONTROLS A contoured neck heel means access to the upper frets couldn't be much easier.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Chambered mahogany w/solid spruce and flame maple veneer facing
NECK: Mahogany, glued-in
FINGERBOARD: Pau ferro, 16" radius
FRETS: 19 (plus three partial), medium/small
PICKUP: Fishman/Córdoba Stage pickup system w/under-saddle and body (top) sensors
CONTROLS: Volume, EQ and Body Blend
HARDWARE: Pau ferro w/bone saddle, Gold classical-style tuners with black buttons and rollers
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Edge Burst (as reviewed)
CASE: Gigbag included
CONTACT: www.córdoba guitars.com

Photography Phil Barker

WALRUS AUDIO LORE £285

Love is the Lore?

Walrus Audio pedals can be inspirational tools. A case in point is the Slö, and its follow-up the Slötvå reverb that we recently looked at; a shoegazer's dream. The Lore is very much in that realm of lush ambient depths players can fall into, this time adding delay to the reverb soup. Walrus' onboard algorithms offer a one-unit fast-track to rich atmospheres, but this one is also not a small monetary investment.

As ever, spending quality time with the parameters and five combinations of delay and reverb are vital in discovering whether our £285 is money well spent. The Lore's USP is really about how its overlapping analogue reverb and delay feedback paths interact, with the added potentials of pitch and reverse control feeding in, too. The five modes are as follows: reverse delay into reverse reverb; reverse delay into AN octave-up reverb; reverse delay into AN octave-down reverb; reverse reverb into forward reverb; and pitch delay into pitch delay. The role of some of the controls change depending on which of these five programs you're in but modulation and the wet-dry mix knobs are consistent in all.

A tap tempo footswitch here can also be used for a 'rise' burst of double speed if you hold it down, or half speed 'dive' depending on how it's set. Keeping the Mix control low to start and trying different levels of feedback, the first two modes stood out as the most instantly inspiring and musical to us for cinematic arpeggios and swirling chords. It sounds spectacular and responds well to picking dynamics, allowing harder picking to let loose the feedback more.

The Lore feels very much a pedal for post-rock and ambient styles, as opposed to a regular go-to tonal Swiss Army knife like the company's Mako series. But that's not its intention. Still, for us it's a little bit steeply priced if you're not looking for a one-pedal source of inspiration, especially the lack of stereo, and disappointing absence of onboard presets compared to the Slötvå. But for sonic soundscaping it's mission accomplished.

Rob Laing

> "MISSION ACCOMPLISHED FOR SONIC SOUNDSCAPING"

SUMMARY

FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★☆☆
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★☆
OVERALL RATING	★★★★☆

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Delay, reverb

CONTROLS: Feedback, Regen, Mod, Mix, X, Time, Tone, Program, Bypass footswitch, Tap tempo/Rise/Dive footswitch

SOCKETS: Input, output, power

BYPASS: Buffered (with switchable trails)

POWER: 9V DC 300mA minimum

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Words Ellie Rogers

MINNIE MARKS

Hailing from Eastern Australia, multi-instrumentalist Minnie Marks is a bonafide triple threat. She sings, plays complex slide guitar riffs on a beloved 1956 Gibson ES-295 Goldtop, and keeps a beat going underneath with a custom-made, nine-pedal monster of a foot drum. "It's retro and me trying to hone in on some of the greats' style but put my own flair on it, too," she says. Marks combines all three elements with an effortless charisma that belies the strenuous labour going on in her brain, and at her fingertips and toes. "Putting it all together took a couple of days but after those neuro paths connected in my brain, it was on from there."

The trick to successful multitasking, she explains, is to have at least one element that requires less focus than the others. "I always had quite a strong influence of concentrating on deep seated rhythmic guitar playing, and that helped me a lot to copy and paste it over to drums," she explains. "If I think of it like dancing, then I'm all good!" With every available limb in use, one might imagine there'd be little available space for stompboxes. However, Marks manages to squeeze in a choice selection of "soundscaping stuff", including a Jam Pedals Delay Llama Xtreme, a Strymon Flint tremolo and a Jackson Audio Bloom.

She gets her rich bluesy tone by running everything through a Fender Tweed Deluxe, with the addition of a Victoria Reverberato amp head – a boutique take on a Fender-style reverb tank with vibrato included. Inspired by Joey Landreth, Marks uses a brass RockSlide and is pleased to report that she'll soon be releasing her own signature model with the company. "There's so many slides out there, but as a girl, I'm like, none of these work!" she laughs. "They're beautiful slides in the way they make them fit your finger properly."

Marks is currently working on her fourth studio album, but it's been far from plain sailing. She suffers from a variety of heart and auto-immune conditions, had to have major surgery in 2021 to fit a mechanical valve to her inbuilt "metronome", and was recently rushed back to hospital because a blood clot had lodged in said new valve and urgently needed to be "melted." Now back home, with her focus returning to making music, she remains positive: "I feel extremely lucky and there's definite clarity around my music again. It's like I'm a kid. I just have that absolute pure love for it."

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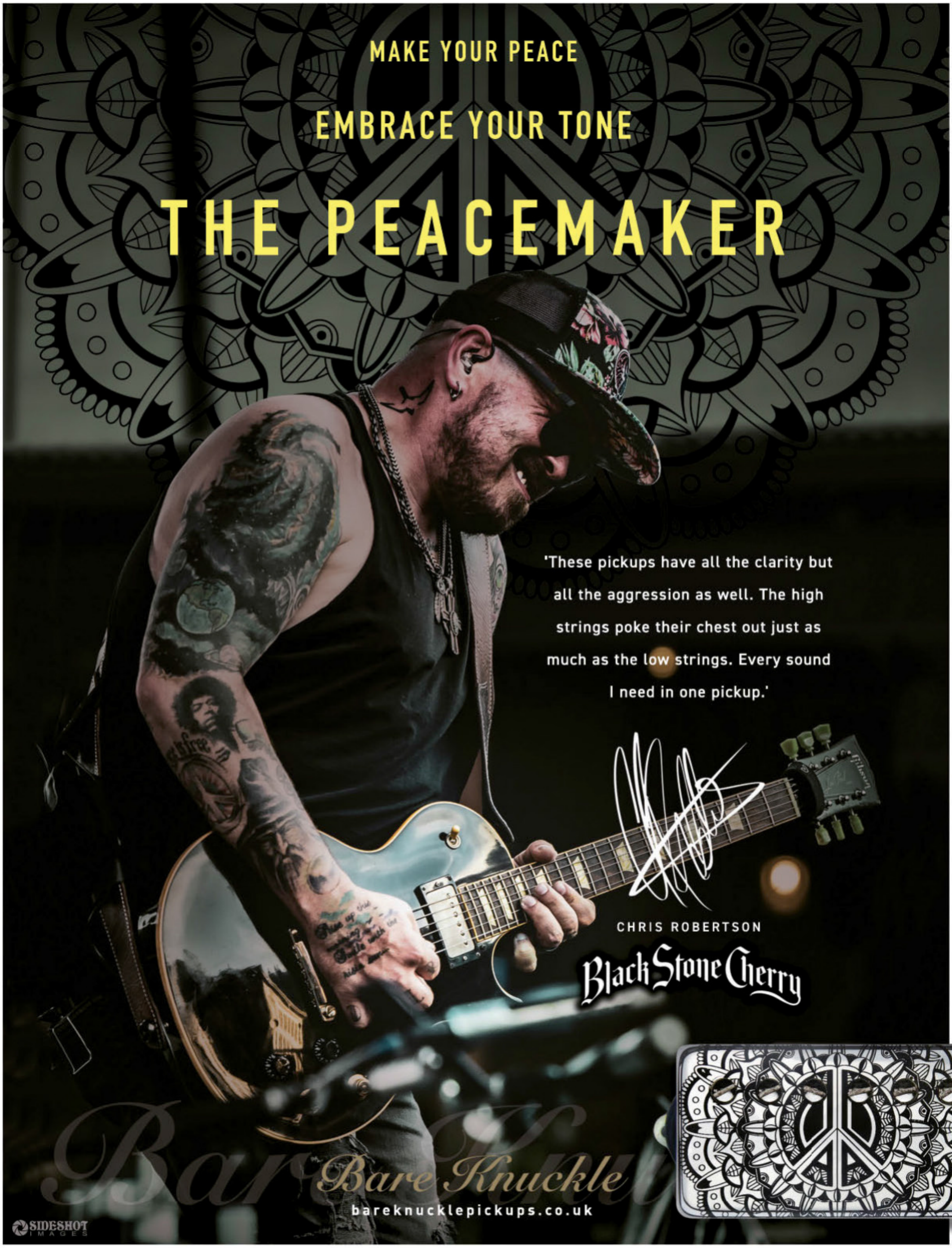
THE PEACEMAKER



'These pickups have all the clarity but all the aggression as well. The high strings poke their chest out just as much as the low strings. Every sound I need in one pickup.'

CHRIS ROBERTSON

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